

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE: THE POWER OF HEALING FOR INCARCERATED
WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION, ART, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

by

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Education, Art, and Community Support

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that programs designed for those who are incarcerated that incorporate a variety of educational, artistic, networking, and skill-building features produce meaningful change by developing participants' self-esteem, self-expression, and communication skills. I evaluate three types of programs—traditional education, art education, and what I call “holistic” programs—to determine their intentions, methods, contributions, and deficits. Based on an analysis of the best elements of each type of program, I designed a program—my “vision for the future”—that reflects my interests as a communication scholar and community activist.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Stephen John Hartnett

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to several people. First, to my partner, Gabe Radovsky, who has ridden the tides of thesis writing and preparation with me, while always being empathetic and encouraging. Thanks to David Edinborough, for even through our friendship has its ups and downs, we have always pulled through for one another. I also thank my friends, Misty Saribal and Bridget Royer, for helping me through these last couple of years by inspiring me. I would also like to thank Marc Rich, who always helps me to find my communication vision when I lose it. Thank you, Janis Kelly, for always being there for me every step of the way. Thank you, Grandpa and Grandma Palidwor, for all your help. To my Mom, Dad, Grandma Meally, and sister, thank you for always telling me that I could do this, regardless of how I said otherwise. Thank you, Grandpa Tom, for always supporting me. I miss you, and I will do a PhD, I promise; this is for you.

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List of Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION

- EORO Each One Reach One: Transforming Kids Behind Bars
PCAP Prison Creative Arts Project
UCD University of Colorado at Denver
DWCF Denver Women's Correctional Facility

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Vignette

The sun bounces off the dark water in a small town outside of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. A combination of paved and dirt roads make up the streets in the tightly knit community of Lac Du Bonnet. With a population of just over 1,000 residents, this small town is the definition of rural living. Small houses dot both the main and side streets of the community, some in good shape but others desperately in need of repair. One building on Third Street stands out: a house that takes up two lots, has a property dotted with trees, and boasts sunny pastels as its outer colors. With a ramp and a set of stairs leading up to its double French doors, this building radiates a sense of hope. With a brightly painted sign of children holding hands, Mrs. Lucci's is a resource center that serves the inhabitants of Lac du Bonnet.

Inside, the building's interior matches much of its exterior: vivid colors mark the inside walls, except those walls that are heavily covered by local community members' artwork or littered with flyers advertising community projects and local gatherings. Laughter echoes from another room, where students are working with staff to achieve their grade 12. Most of the students have not excelled at the local high school, which is underequipped to deal with high drug addiction and poverty issues, yet they are quick to say hello and to chat with visitors about why they stopped by the house.

In another room, mothers work on their grade 12, thrilled with each newly accomplished task, knowing that these undertakings are yet another tool to push them forward. Staff work tirelessly and come up against one roadblock after another. A staff

member who was hired to help with pre-kindergarten students discovered that her position was moot because none of the mothers had the funds or the means to bring their children to the program. Instead, she spends her days, nights, and weekends trying to connect the impoverished, often abused, struggling women to other available resources that Mrs. Lucci's cannot provide. Staff members are brought to tears when they hear of the beatings, and even the sexual assaults, that the students experience. Staff members explain the important role that they play, but they emphasize the hard work of the students, and a deep sadness permeates their voices when they go into detail about those who they help. Each staff member is hopeful but frazzled by low funding for the center and minimal public understanding of its mission. Every year, the center petitions for funds and deals with the hostile federal and provincial schooling boards, yet it still maintains the necessary social support for those who frequent the center. Every year is a struggle, but without this center, staff members are well aware of what may follow the youth and mothers who they serve. Lacking a grade 12 education, with no marketable skills and minimal positive social interaction, many of those served by Mrs. Lucci's would suffer financially, emotionally, and physically, leading them closer to becoming those most forgotten and discarded by society: prisoners.

* * * * *

Polished and brilliant in the sunlight, a long string of razor wire stands in stark contrast to its surroundings. Flashy, it spirals for what seems like miles, an indicator of the status and position of its owners, but for others, it serves as a constant reminder of its

power to control. Surrounding the Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF), the string of galvanized metal snakes for what seems like forever in Denver, Colorado, simultaneously constraining and pushing away those on either side of a story-high fence. The facility's border, sharp to the touch, reminds those behind it of what they have done, who they are, or, at the very least, who they have been told they are. Upon entering, visitors are greeted by an armed guard, often unsmiling and prompt in his or her permission and denial of entry into the largest women's prison in the state.¹ Large metal doors separate visitors from those being visited, and disgruntled, underpaid staff escorts insiders and outsiders to one another with military proficiency.² Off-white walls trimmed with a sad-looking teal mark endless hallways within the facility.

A smell special to prisons, somewhere between a hospital and a nursing home, permeates everything—walls, cells, hair, and clothes—but it is the thick air of sadness and apathy that hits the senses and leaves a rotten taste in the mouth. Women mill about, some on their way to various classes, others killing time on their sentences, but they all walk in circle after circle in the courtyard formed by the clustering of incarceration stations, known as “cell blocks,” which surround sparse recreation spaces and a cafeteria. Women form a line a 100 people deep, slowly shuffling toward the medication that numbs the devastating effects of prison. Depression is rampant, but how much of it is biochemical and how much of it is situational? How much is treatable and how much is just the consequence of a mind that has been kept too long behind walls? How does one begin to treat a mind, and body, that have seen far worse things than that of the razor wire

¹ Denver Women's Correctional Facility, *Colorado Department of Corrections*, accessed March 6, 2013 at <http://www.doc.state.co.us/facility/dwcf-denver-womens-correctional-facility>.

² Corrections Officers Salary in Colorado, *Indeed. One Search. All Jobs*, (March 16, 2013), accessed March 6, 2013 at: <http://www.indeed.com/salary/q-Corrections-Officer-l-Colorado.html>.

that keeps them locked away? How do prisoners heal while trapped behind a wall that, simultaneously, keeps them safe yet destroys them? How can wounds and bruises be cleaned that have already physically healed, but that have left visible and invisible scars, that haunt dreams and impact life choices?

* * * * *

Walled in from the world and walled out by society, the women at DWCF THAT have sad tales to tell that often mirror the stories of the women of Lac du Bonnet. The stories these women share rival those who have served in the military, for they have endured years of abuse, yelling, and trauma; they are veterans of their personal wars. In fact, women in the United States and Canada are abused in high numbers every year, which results in a myriad of negative social consequences, including high levels of drug addiction, devastated families, impoverishment, and a crippling level of desperation. In Canada, half of all women report some incident of abuse since the age of 16; in the United States, 25% of women have experienced domestic violence.³ These women often wind up incarcerated because of years spent in relationships where they were subjected to verbal and physical aggression, poverty, and drug addiction.⁴ Unfortunately,

³ The Facts About Violence Against Women, *Canadian Women's Foundation*, accessed March 6, 2013, <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence>; Domestic Violence Statistics. *Domestic Violence Resource Center*, (2013), <http://www.dvrc-or.org/domestic/violence/resources/C61>.

⁴ Paula M. Ditton, "Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Mental Health and Treatment of Prisoners and Probationers," *U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs*, (1999), accessed November 28, 2012 at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/mhtip.pdf>; Maire Sinha, "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile," *Juristat Article, Statistics Canada*, (2010), accessed February 8, 2013 at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643-eng.pdf>.

incarceration exacerbates the trauma and pain that these women have experienced. A one prisoner so eloquently states:

Prisons represent a temporary warehouse where goods will eventually come out. But what if these goods are then more spoiled? We have prisons because we have come to believe in them, even though they do represent only a small proportion of the criminalized. Prisons represent the end of system where we put the most readily detected, the most readily prosecuted, and the most readily forgotten about.⁵

For many of these women, they were abused prior to prison, and incarceration does not put an end to that cycle.

Women who stay in bad situations often unknowingly pass on the message that unhealthy family dynamics are acceptable and normal. Their daughters grow up internalizing the communication and other behavioral patterns of their youth, and repeating the patterns of their mothers; generations of mistreatment and abuse stack up with similar long-term results.⁶ Interpersonal violence for women and their children is augmented by poor communication skills.⁷ With positive communication absent, and, abusive relations normalized both verbally or nonverbally, there are devastating results for daughters, who continue to choose partners that resemble their abusive fathers instead of men who will treat them with respect.⁸ To change that pattern for the next generation, civilians, activists, and scholars need to make a difference in breaking this vicious cycle,

⁵ Steward, Melissa, "Prisons for Women's Invisible Minority." in *Writing as Resistance: The Journal of Prisoners on Prison Anthology (1988-2002)*, edited by Bob Gaucher, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2002): 176.

⁶ Juliet Robboy and Kristen G. Anderson, "Intergenerational Child Abuse and Coping," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 26, (2011): 3526-3541; Kellie Palazzolo, Anthony Roberto and Elizabeth Babin, "The Relationship Between Parents' Verbal Aggression and Young Adult Children's Intimate Partner Violence Victimization and Perpetration," *Health Communication* 4, (2010): 358.

⁷ Palazzolo et al, "The Relationship Between Parents": 358.

⁸ Miriam K. Ehrensaft, Patria Cohen, Jocelyn Brown, Elizabeth Smailies, Henian Chen and Jeffrey G. Johnson, "Intergenerational Transmission of Partner Violence: A 20-Year Prospective Study," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 71, (2003): 741-753.

Perhaps the women in Lac du Bonnet and those in DWCF do not have to share the same conclusions to their sad tales; perhaps new stories can be spun if new tools are offered. Maybe then these women could paint a future that reflects their hopes and not their greatest fears. In this MA thesis, I argue that by working with disadvantaged mothers, incarcerated or not, and their children, dire outcomes are preventable. Instead of facilities such as the DWCF, a U.S. prison that houses the same number of people who live in Lac du Bonnet, resource centers and communication support through arts and education should be available to enact real change.

Framing a Response

Communication scholars can make a difference in the lives of women and children who have experienced innumerable horrors. A combination of creative arts, education programs, and community support can make a difference in women getting out, and staying out, of prison. By using communication as a strategic tool for change, scholars and activists can offer opportunities for incarcerated women, their children, and their unincarcerated counterparts who may be on the fast track to prison, and thereby, provide opportunities to empower themselves, and put to paper their thoughts and feelings. Laura Martinez's (a prisoner) beautiful poem is indicative of the possibilities of creative communication and prisoners:

I can't be there
Because of choices I have made
I knew they would hurt you
But couldn't stop
Because of my addiction

The only thing I can ask you
Is to please learn from my mistakes

Make the right choices
And surround yourself
With caring, positive people

I'm not mad at you
I'm mad at myself
And even though I'm not there
I will always love you
My beautiful child.⁹

This poem is a personal testament to a mother's love and hopes for her child. By using art, this woman has shared her wisdom with her child in hopes of passing on positive values, an opportunity that, for her, like many women, has been largely cut off to this point. Reflecting on her mistakes, a mother attempts to explain her experiences to her child, a child who she cannot see or touch, and who she can only regularly reach via paper and pen as phone calls are costly and limited resources often prevent frequent visits from family.

With limited familial, education, and support opportunities, new avenues for personal improvement and social change must be developed for the damaged, forgotten prison population. I argue that enhancing and developing opportunities for communication improvement through art, education, and programs that increase self-esteem can help women to get out and to stay out of prison and, thereby, prevent generations of female and child abuse within the home. By improving personal and interpersonal communication amongst imprisoned women, and between imprisoned women and their children, women and children can pave a new path to change and freedom instead of following the dusty, well-worn road to the gates of prison.

⁹ Laura Martinez, "My Beautiful Child," *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 8, (2009): 13.

* * * * *

To better explore the potential of positive communication in preventative and remedial situations, I compare three types of prison activism that are reflected in education and artistic programs. First, I explore what can be described as exclusively traditional education- or art-based education programs. I then address several holistic programs that embrace the positive qualities of both types of programs and that also provide multiple services for those who are, or are at-risk of being, incarcerated. Within each of these types of programs, I delineate the type of interventions used, the intentions of those interventions; specific work expectations; methods used to deliver the program; program outcomes, the elements worth incorporating into other programs, or lateral contributions; and, lastly, tensions and deficits of those programs. Finally, emphasizing the positive qualities of both education and artistic programs, I design a program that incorporates many qualities into a holistic program. Focusing on creative writing, literature, and public speaking, that program is intended to provide a wide range of skills that build women's self-esteem, foster their creativity, and, most important, develop in them strong communication skills. Hopefully, through this combination of academia and activism, society can put to rest some of the fears and issues that plague so many women, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters.

Social Justice and the Prison System

Communication in this context of social justice activism provides insight into how to enact the change that is needed, especially for women who have faced innumerable challenges, and, often, tragedies. Too many women are without necessary opportunities

to develop their communication skills to a level that will propel them forward successfully.¹⁰ Lacking a strong working knowledge of intrapersonal and interpersonal, communication skills, many of those individuals flounder in school, work, and life, in general.¹¹

Activism that addresses the unique educational and emotional needs of prisoners reveals how improved communication can change an individual's, group's, or community's current surroundings and lifestyles, even if only at the personal level. By interacting with one another in a positive fashion, with the educational system, and with other government institutions, people stand a stronger chance of successfully engaging others in a meaningful dialogue in pursuit of change. Ongoing work and the development of strong communication skills cannot only change prisoners' lives but also the lives of mothers and children who are at-risk of incarceration. A home that encourages strong relationships and constructive communication will provide ample opportunities for children to blossom intellectually and emotionally.

To support this goal, activists and scholars have answered the call of those who face great communication challenges. Using communicative practices to engage individuals, groups, government agencies, and academic institutions, I argue that individuals can divert their current path by employing new communication skills that are developed through increased self-expression and self-esteem. Communication-based

¹⁰ Stephen John Hartnett, Jennifer K. Wood, and Bryan McCann, "Turning Silence into Speech and Action: Prison Activism & Pedagogy of Empowered Citizenship," *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies* 8, (2011): 331–352; PCARE, "Fighting the Prison-Industrial Complex: A Call to Communication and Cultural Studies Scholars to Change the World," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4, (2007): 402–420.

¹¹ Rose Braz and Myesha Williams, "Diagnosing the Schools-to-Prisons Pipeline: Maximum Security, Minimum Learning," in *Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex*, Stephen John Hartnett (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011): 126–145

interventions have the benefit of often being cost-effective, easy to employ, easily shared with people, and learned relatively quickly. Communication strategies that focus on the value of education, artistic expression, and verbal and nonverbal expression are relatively easy to import into facilities that may be more hesitant to have activism work implemented, such as prisons.¹² By having those who are most silenced develop confidence through their improved communication skills, these survivors—no, thrivers—can carry this message forward to others. Programs that provide ample opportunities to explore education, art, and job-related skill building encourages individual change, which, even if only on the familial level, has the potential to create social change.

Communication Activism for Social Justice Scholarship

I situate my work in what is known as *communication activism for social justice scholarship*, a field that originates from applied communication scholarship.¹³ Applied communication addresses social questions by conducting research and implementing solutions. As Cissna explains:

Applied research sets out to contribute to knowledge by answering a real, pragmatic, social question or by solving a real pragmatic, social problem. Applied *communication* research involves such a question or problem of human communication or examines human communication in order to provide an answer or solution to the question or problem. The intent or goal of the inquiry (as manifest in the research reports itself) is the hallmark of applied communication research. Applied communication research involves the development of knowledge regarding a real human communication problem or question.¹⁴

¹² Eleanor M. Novek, “Heaven, Hell, and Here”: Understanding the Impact of Incarceration through a Prison Newspaper,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, (2005): 281–301; Bradford B. Venable “At-Risk and In-Need: Reaching Juvenile Offenders through Art,” *Art Education* 58, (2005): 48–53; Roy W. Persons, “Art Therapy With Serious Juvenile Offenders: A Phenomenological Analysis,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 53, (2009): 433–453.

¹³ Frey, Lawrence and Carragee, Kevin M., “Introduction,” *Communication Activism Volumes. 1 & 2* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Kenneth Cissna, as seen in Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, “Introduction,” *Communication Activism Volume One: Communication for Social Change*, (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2007): 4-5.

However, even though this branch of communication scholarship attempts to provide practical solutions for a variety of social concerns, ranging from courtroom dynamics to town halls and antiwar protests, without an “all-in” mentality, researchers and the communities with which they work often lose valuable opportunities to enact social change by remaining on the sidelines.¹⁵ When researchers offer communities communication-based interventions, researchers shift from third-person-perspective research as observers to first-person-perspective research as participants; as a result, communication scholarship can now address societal issues not simply by theorizing them but also by addressing key causes and symptoms of those social injustices.¹⁶ By engaging in dialogic research, collaboration is formed between “committed researchers and the members of a community who, together, engage in analyzing a social environment for the purpose of creating some needed action or change.”¹⁷

Conquergood, along with Frey et al., reiterate the importance of research not being complicit with dominant ideologies. These scholars stress work that is not solely rhetorical in nature but, instead, makes hands-on research a priority:

As communication scholars who traffic in symbols, images, representations, rhetorical strategies, signifying practices, the media, and the social work of talk, we should understand better than anyone else that our disciplinary practice is *in* the world. As engaged intellectual we understand that we are entailed within

¹⁵ See: Sunwolf, Hartnett, and Jovanovic in Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, *Communication Activism Volume One*, (2007).

¹⁶ Lawrence Frey, “What a Difference More Difference-Making Communication Scholarship Might Make: Making a Difference From and Through Communication Research,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 37, (2010): 210.

¹⁷ Eleanor Novek and Rebecca Sanford, “At the Checkpoint: Journalistic Practices, Researcher Reflexivity, and Dialectical Dilemmas in a Women’s Prison,” in *Communication Activism Volume Two: Media and Performance Activism*, edited by in Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2007): 73.

world systems of oppression and exploitation.... Our choice is to stand alongside or against domination, but not outside, above, or beyond it.¹⁸

This intersection of critical and applied communication makes communication activism scholarship possible.¹⁹ Activists, using academic knowledge, develop critical awareness of existing conditions and power structures, and, consequently, they can aid individuals, groups, organizations, and communities in new and innovative ways. As a result, this type of activism has pushed academia in new directions, including prison publications, play writing and performing, art displays, and a variety of social networking within communities.²⁰

However, this intersection of academia and activism has caused an uneasy tension about the role of academics vis-à-vis social issues. Applied communication scholarship has faced difficulties in attaining widespread academic approval, in part, because of researchers' direct participation in communities. As with much of the social sciences, first-person involvement goes against the idea of the neutral development of scientific knowledge and the noninterference principle, and, hence, it is considered by some to be beyond academic boundaries. A misunderstanding among academics about the role of theoretical and research-based actions has been prevalent, and applied communication, initially, was viewed skeptically.²¹ However, in the last few decades, applied communication scholarship, and more recently communication activism for social justice scholarship, has taken root and become recognized as a legitimate paradigm within the

¹⁸ Dwight Conquergood, as seen in Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, "Introduction," *Communication Activism Volume One: Communication for Social Change*, (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2007): 30.

¹⁹ Leah Ritchie, "The Organization Consultant as Activist: A Case Study of a Non-Profit Organization," In *Communication Activism Volume One: Communication for Social Change*, edited by in Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 2007): 413.

²⁰ These programs are detailed more extensively later in this thesis.

²¹ See: Gary L. Kreps, Lawrence R. Frey and Dan O'Hair, "Applied Communication Research: Scholarship That Can Make A Difference," *Journal of Applied Communication*, (June, 1981).

communication discipline, providing insights and answers that were not available before.²² As a result, scholars, increasingly, have looked at a wide variety of social concerns, with Frey, along with others, calling for communication scholars to put their theoretical understandings and answers to practical use in communities and other social settings to promote social justice.²³ Frey states that this type of scholarship is “grounded in communication scholars immersing themselves in the stream of human life, taking direct vigorous action in support of or opposition to a controversial issue for the purpose of promoting social change and justice.”²⁴ Academics, thus, have the ability to work for and toward meaningful change in their communities by putting into action what they know and by working with oppressed communities to develop more just societal conditions, which includes working in organizations such as prisons.

This thesis follows in the communication and social justice scholarship tradition by examining how the prison, as an organization, can be made more just by offering comprehensive programming to prisoners and those at-risk of incarceration. Within each type of educational, artistic, and holistic programming described in this thesis, I provide an overview of its services that are oriented toward reaching at-risk, or incarcerated, populations, exploring their social contributions and difficulties facing those programs. Finally, in the last chapter, I briefly describe an ideal program design, and in the Appendix I provide a proposal and syllabus for an arts-education program to be offered at

²² Lawrence Frey, “Communication and Social Justice Research: Truth, Justice, and the Applied Communication Way,” *The Journal of Applied Communication Research*, (1998): 155; Frey and Carragee, *Communication Activism* Volume 1, (207): 251.

²³ See: Frey and Carragee, *Volume 1 and 2*, (2007); PCARE, “Fighting the Prison-Industrial Complex” (2007); Frey, “Truth, Justice, and the Applied Communication Way,” (1998): 156.

²⁴ Frey and Carragee, “Introduction,” *Communication Activism* Vol. 1, (2007): 10

the DWCF. Hence, this thesis provides a comprehensive view of current, and future, prison programming.

CHAPTER II

PROVIDING EMPOWERING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION

Women who have been, or are at risk-of being, incarcerated face considerable disadvantages when compared to their male counterparts. Specifically, even though women often have more complicated needs than do men, because of increased rates of physical and emotional trauma, their prison programming is often less developed and under implemented, and women continue to face ongoing difficulties and limited success in both the educational and business spheres. Worldwide, women are less educated than men are. Between 2000 and 2011, in 127 of 200 countries surveyed, the percentage of women who obtained a high school diploma was less than 50%, compared to men, who made up more than 50% of those with a high school education. In some nations, men comprised more than 65% of those who graduated from high school, leaving women at a dismal 35%. In the United States, women make up 52% of those with a high school diploma, but Canada falls behind at only 48%, which means that educational barriers are still an issue, even in developed nations.²⁵ As a result of these barriers, one in four women in the United States will not finish her secondary education. For minority groups, this number pushes upwards to one third or higher. In fact, 50% of Native-American females, 4 out of 10 black females, and nearly 4 out of 10 Latinas will not finish high school.²⁶ It is no coincidence that these minority groups also make up the highest proportion per population of those who are incarcerated. Female imprisonment in the last 3 decades has increased by 800%, which further damages families and limits the social

²⁵ United Nations, *Status and Indicators on Women and Men, Table 4c. Secondary Education*, December 11, 201, accessed February 8, 2013 at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm>.

²⁶ “When Girls Don’t Graduate We All Fail: A Call to Improve High School Graduation Rates for Girls,” *National Women’s Law Center*, (2007), accessed February 8, 2013 at: http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/when_girls_dont_graduate.pdf.

mobility of women and their children.²⁷ In Canada, in the last 10 years, female incarceration has increased 64%, with minorities, again, overrepresented based on their percentage of the population.²⁸

What I call “traditional-education programs,” have shown consistent benefits and are often effective in reducing recidivism. Traditional-education programs are geared towards GED attainment, vocational training, and post-secondary education and provide useful tools to those who are in prison, and are worth exploring to determine the potential results of these types of interventions. Scholars who have studied the impact of prison education provide interesting insight into a growing epidemic of the uneducated or undereducated. Some of these key studies include:

- An Ohio Corrections study (Pre and post Pell Grant study)
- Two studies in British Columbia, Canada that followed 2000 federal prisoners post-prison to determine recidivism rates for those who participated in educational programs versus those who did not
- A Virginia Corrections, Huttonsville Correctional Center study, which determined the impact of Graduate Education Development (GED) and vocational training in Virginia.
- A study of GED attainment in Florida
- Effects of vocational education in Washington prisons during 1987

²⁷ Institute on Women and Criminal Justice, “Quick Facts: Women and Criminal Justice—2009,” *Women’s Prison Association*, (2009), accessed February 8, 2013 at:

<http://www.wpaonline.org/pdf/Quick%20Facts%20Women%20and%20CJ%202009.pdf>.

²⁸ “Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview,” *Public Safety Canada*, (2010), accessed February 8, 2013 at: <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/res/cor/rep/2011-ccrso-eng.aspx#c4>.

- A New York-based study that studied the effectiveness of GED attainment in reducing recidivism

In addition to these programs, a comprehensive overview of postsecondary education in prison is provided by Jon Marc Taylor, a PhD who is incarcerated in Missouri, and who is exemplified because of his unique experience with correctional education

Educational programs, and resulting studies, such as those listed above, are on the receiving end of ongoing critiques. Even when studies primarily indicate positive results in working with prisoners, it does not seem to be enough. Prisoners face vilification by local news stations and watchdog groups, and political and social sentiment express outrage at the thought of “luxuries” for prisoners, including things such as basic education, the atypical opportunity for self-improvement through arts, or even extremely limited television access. On some websites, as much as 68% of respondents think that prison has *too many* resources.²⁹

However, there are bloggers who see the other side of the issue. As a respondent on debate.org argues:

You cannot make people better people by torturing them. Anyone who thinks prisons in the US are easy has never been to prison. Prison prisoners have no rights. They get can get beaten or sexually abused and they have no way out. And if anyone thinks that that makes people better human beings then they do not know what they are talking about. Now if we look at recidivism rates you will find that Scandinavian prisons are in the single digits of percentage. Why? Because they actually try to rehabilitate people.

This is an interesting argument, because Scandinavian countries have much lower recidivism rates compared to the United States. The United States has a recidivism rate

²⁹ *Family Watchdog: Awareness is the Best Defense,* accessed March 6, 2013 at: <http://www.familywatchdog.us/>; “Do Prisoners Have Too Many Comforts Such as Cable and Internet While Incarcerated?” Debate.org, accessed March 6, 2013 at: <http://www.debate.org/opinions/do-prisoners-have-too-many-comforts-such-as-cable-and-internet-while-incarcerated>.

that is almost as high as 66% within 3 years of being released, compared to Norway, for instance, which has a recidivism rate of approximately 20%.³⁰ Progressive education, art, and rehabilitation programs are mandated in Norway, and Norway's focus on self-improvement is a lesson that North America could, and should, embrace. As many people are becoming aware, the more encaged prisoners are, the more enraged and damaged this most neglected population becomes.

However, for every person who offers a positive comment said about prisoners, there are hundreds, if not thousands, who have something negative to say about prisoner rights and resources. Beth DeRoos, on National Public Radio's website, comments in response to higher education for prisoners: "This is so WRONG!!! These folks get a FREE college education yet crime victims and their families and law abiding [sic] folks have to PAY to go to college????? I am writing my state reps here in CA now!! This is so so wrong!"³¹ Nick M follows up with: "I don't want to issue college degrees for the incarcerated. There are many young people that have not committed any crimes that deserve this education ahead of the jailed population. This is taking 'rehabilitation' to new heights. Why don't we buy them a Benz and a nice suit for their first interview while we're at it?!"³²

Although prisoners face innumerable struggles, others, in lower socioeconomic statuses, see themselves as hardworking citizens and are outraged that prisoners may "get for free" what they work so hard to achieve. Often, however, prison-administrated college courses are not completely state-funded—if at all. In California, for example,

³⁰ Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics, "Recidivism Statistics: Norway," (2010), accessed March 6, 2013 at: <http://www3.unil.ch/wpmu/space/publications/recidivism-studies/#.UTfkIOviohN>.

³¹ Richard Gonzales, "Inside San Quentin, Prisoners go to College," *npr.org*, (June 20, 2011), <http://www.npr.org/2011/06/20/137176620/inside-san-quentin-prisoners-go-to-college>.

³² Gonzales, "Inside San Quentin."

there is only one college that works with prisoners that has state support, but it is limited and relies primarily on volunteers to serve the 0.002% of the Californian prisoners it helps.³³ Faced with such limited resources and dealing with constant political backlash, educational programs are quickly slashed, including art and higher education-based courses, because they are seen as frivolous. Therefore, prioritized programs are educational programs that are mostly reminiscent of strategies employed in secondary schools, because educational programs have such a strong focus on “returning” dysfunctional members to society, those programs are expected to turn out functioning members to fill menial, economically disadvantaged work placements. In the face of a failing economy and limited jobs for those who have never been incarcerated, it is overwhelming to think of the difficulties that ex-prisoners face when exiting prison.

Taylor, a man with a PhD who currently is incarcerated in Missouri, has researched prison education extensively and refutes these objections:

Those who object to postsecondary correctional education programs because of the drain they place on correctional education budgets are either misinformed as to the proportions of these budgets that support such programs or ignorant of the various funding structures of the programs themselves. From a correctional management standpoint, these programs obviously represent an extremely cost-effective method of efficiently providing educational programming for numbers of prisoners in state institutions.³⁴

Taylor’s research focuses on the effects of the abolishment of Pell Grants and he points out that state and government funding for prisoner education was microscopic:

In 1991–1992, 3.4 million students received Pell grants. Of these, fewer than 30,000 were inmate students; in other words, less than 0.8 of 1% of the total number of Pell grants issued went to prisoners. By any stretch of even the most

³³ Sara Mayeux, “Programs: An Unfunded Unmandate,” *Prison Law Blog*, (December 18, 2010), <http://prisonlaw.wordpress.com/2010/12/18/prison-higher-education-programs-an-unfunded-unmandate/>

³⁴ Jon Marc Taylor, “Should Prisoners Have Access to Collegiate Education? A Policy Issue,” *Educational Policy* 8, (1994): 319.

politically one-sided imagination, this does not constitute a significant diversion of higher education funding.³⁵

Startling statistics such as these indicate that the general public is misled or misunderstands how education is funded with prisons, which, therefore, puts political pressure on politicians to address the “rampant” waste of taxpayer wages. As demonstrated below, this “waste” is simply not the case; instead, prison education monies are an investment that pays off in dividends that are worth describing extensively. Table 1 summarizes the services and results of each type of intervening educational program:

Table 1. Summary of Traditional Education Programs

Type of Intervention(s)	G.E.D. courses, secondary school (youth facilities), vocational classes, limited postsecondary courses/programs
Intervention Intentions	Reduce recidivism, increase employability, build self-esteem through academic achievements, improve personal conduct, offer opportunities for participants to expand educational and skill horizons
Methods	Track participant enrollment, graduation rates, recidivism within a specific time-frame, employability of ex-prisoners, verbal support of facilitators and participants
Outcomes	Overall positive results, programs often showed reduced recidivism in youth and adult rates, especially among those who completed postsecondary education, participants build self-esteem through accomplishments
Lateral Contributions	Education is effective in supporting prisoners' intellectual and skill-based needs, provides template for other programs, shows positive results, emphasizes the importance of intellectual skill building, cross-generational impact through modeling and help with school
Tensions & Deficits	Programs are quantitatively focused and based on funding needs, normative in nature (“good worker”), minimal individualism but personal experience overlooked, do not address issues of abuse and emotional trauma, improves limited skill sets, but do not provide adequate opportunities for self-expression and communication building

³⁵ Taylor, “Should Prisoners have Access to Collegiate Education?”: 320.

Type of Intervention(s) Used

To better understand the contributions of education-based programming in prison, I describe the various programs' qualities. Doing so provides a clear and comparable picture of available prison services. For educational interventions, I describe secondary, postsecondary, vocational, and GED attainment, which all employ typical course curricula, such as writing, science, math, and social science courses. These programs develop prisoners' aptitudes that they did not have prior to prison. Unfortunately, such educational programs face ongoing financial issues because of tight and diminishing funding and expanding restrictions, which significantly effect program offerings. However, even when met with contention, education is still one of most widely recognized forms of rehabilitation in corrections programming, which means that there is hope for effective interventions within prison. Compared to men, women are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to schooling, so education *can* be a powerful tool for change, when services are specialized to prisoner's individual needs and reflect a broad variety of reading, writing, and job skill-building opportunities through communication.

Intervention Intentions

Educational programs primarily focus on having prisoners complete their high school diploma or their GED in hopes of lowering recidivism rates and, thus, reducing costs to correctional departments.³⁶ Being cost-effective has always been a priority of the Department of Corrections; this mentality has become more prevalent in societal and

³⁶ Cerdwen Spark and Anita Harris, "Vocation, Vocation: A Study of Prisoner Education for Women," *Journal of Sociology* 41, (2005): 143–161.

correctional discourse in the last several decades, and has had dramatic impacts on funding and service provision for prisoners. Prior to 1994, education was offered more extensively, but this pattern began to change following an influential study, which stated that education, across the board, did reduce recidivism and lower incarceration costs.³⁷ However, Martinson later recanted his statement of “nothing works” in relation to prison education by acknowledging errors in the original report and finding that some programs did, indeed, make a positive difference for individuals and for the Department of Corrections.³⁸ Martinson’s famous study on prison rehabilitation efforts was meant to offer insight into better rehabilitation programs but, instead, wound up crushing Pell Grants, which were intended to provide diploma and degrees for prisoners and other groups facing extensive disadvantage.³⁹ Unfortunately, because funding is so limited, educational programs are now frequently implemented based on financial resources and not on educational needs.

One problem facing prison educational programs, therefore, is inadequate funding and implementation across the board, for all programs. Another problem is the narrow range of educational programs that are funded. Educational programs in prison, typically, do not focus on emotional and abuse issues, for example, which leave considerable gaps in care, especially with women.

³⁷ Robert Martinson, “What Works? Questions and Answers about Prison Reform,” *Public Interest*, 10 (1974): 22–54.

³⁸ Department of Corrections: Ara Poutama Aeoteroa, “Historical Background: the ‘What Works’ Debate,” *The Effectiveness of Corrections*, accessed April 10, 2013 at: <http://www.corrections.govt.nz/research/the-effectiveness-of-correctional-treatment/historical-background.html>.

³⁹ Rick Sarre, “Beyond ‘What Works?’ A 25 Year Jubilee Retrospective of Robert Martinson,” *History of Crime, Policing and Punishment Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology in conjunction with Charles Sturt University*, (1999), accessed March 6, 2013 at: http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/conferences/hcpp/sarre.pdf.

Specific Work Expectations

In each section, I describe specific work requirements as program requirements for ongoing participation. In many circumstances, the priority is on schoolwork completion. In the majority of the studies conducted, for the programs in question, participants were expected to complete coursework related to basic educational attainment, such as reading literature and writing papers, as well as other assignments typically associated with secondary education. However, programs varied in what they required when it came to academic work, with some emphasizing obtaining high school degree, whereas others focused on attaining a G.E.D, with those programs typically directed at different age groups (youth and adult facilities). Moreover, whereas the study conducted by Virginia Corrections and Cho, Rosa, and Tyler's study prioritized GED attainment, the Canadian-based studies focused on high school, college classes, and vocational studies, with the Washington Correction's study focusing entirely on vocational education. Arguably, a high school diploma is more marketable than is a GED, and vocational and higher education are even more marketable.⁴⁰

Typically, to graduate from any of these programs, assignments are completed and tests are passed. One of the main reasons for such coursework is the ease with which results can be quantified, which is attractive when appealing for funding, compared to providing anecdotal stories of prisoner transformation. However, the results of programs, as well as narratives of participants, have much to bring to the table with regard to education implementation. Unfortunately, these forms of support do not provide the

⁴⁰ Howard R.D. Gordon and Bracie Weldon, "The Impact of Career and Technical Education Programs on Adult Offenders: Learning Behind Bars," *The Journal of Correctional Education*, 54 (2003): 200–209.

figures for which financial planners are looking.⁴¹ As a result, although more qualitative assessed programs have provided consistent evidence of the power of education, they continue to be criticized, even when the evidence powerfully counteracts opinions of politicians and the general public.

Methods

Methods refer to how educational programs attempt to accomplish their stated task of educating and producing success stories. Many of the above-mentioned programs, once implemented via structured courses, are measured by who actually completed the program, whereas others compared how various qualities and types of education (e.g. skill building vs. GED or diploma), impacted recidivism and prisoners' behavior. Both foci are important because behavior within prison is often important for such students' success. Moreover, because many of these programs are federally or state funded, they must pass rigorous requirements to maintain their programming. As a result, statistics are necessary to justify continuing such educational programs. The majority of the educational programs studied, therefore, have sought to provide statistics that would not only increase or maintain funding but also address general public opinion about resources allocated to prisoners.

Taylor, for instance, shares some interesting statistics on prison educational funding and provides a startling insight into how the methods of postsecondary education evoke positive responses beyond simply completing a degree:

⁴¹ John Nuttall, Linda Hollmen and Michele Staley, "The Effect of Earning a GED on Recidivism Rates," *JCE* 54, (2003): 90–94; Dennis B. Anderson, Sara L. Anderson and Randall E. Schumacker, "Correctional Education a Way to Stay Out: Recommendations for Illinois and a Report of the Anderson Study," (Chicago: Illinois Council on Vocational Education, 1988); Gordon and Weldon, (2003).

To provide PSCE (post-secondary correctional education) opportunities from an institutional management perspective is that inmates serving extremely long sentences (10 years or more) very often function as role models for offenders serving shorter terms of imprisonment. They not only are role models but frequently function as tutors and peer counselors for fellow inmates who will be released into society in the relatively near future.⁴²

Arguably, Taylor's sentiments regarding the development of prison peer-tutors could have been an unintended result of educational programs, but these sentiments reflecting teamwork and mentorship have proved to be an excellent aspect of prisoner classes. Prisoners, as demonstrated later in this thesis, also comment on how being of service to others is of utmost importance in their healing and changing.

Some researchers, such as Randall Wright, in implementing traditional education-based programs, have moved beyond statistical information to determine how caring and involved relationships between prisoners and teachers can positively impact prisoners' lives.⁴³ Wright, like other researchers, administrated questionnaires to prison educators, as well as to prisoners, and determined the quality and type of relationships between tutors and those they taught, which, ultimately, impact prisoners in important ways. His results showed that supportive, positive relationships emphasize and amplify the learning process. Cerdwen and Sparks also conducted in-depth interviews with 31 prisoners and found that a variety of educational approaches, including type, quantity, and interpersonal support programs, help and support diverse prisoner populations.⁴⁴ Other educational programs are studied from very different perspectives, such as via phenomenological

⁴² Jon Marc Taylor, "Should Prisoners Have Access to Collegiate Education? A Policy Issue," *Educational Policy* 8, (1994): 331.

⁴³ Randall Wright, "Care as the "Heart" of Prison Teaching," *The Journal of Correctional Education* 55, (2004): 191–192.

⁴⁴ Ceridwen Sparks and Anita Harris, "Vocation, vocation: A Study of Prisoner Education for Women," *Journal of Sociology* 41, (2005): 143–161.

research, in which educators and activists immerse themselves in understanding events and interactions among those participating in the courses, and help to devise and implement more successful programs because of their hands-on experience and knowledge.⁴⁵ Phenomenological research is important because it provides in-depth information on the individual issues and struggles facing prisoners day-to-day. By using a variety of methods, program implementers bring rich narratives, along with statistical information, to the prison-education table.

Outcomes

Outcomes represent the successes of programs based on the expectations and program requirements. In particular, prison education is one of the more effective ways to deal with high levels of crime and recidivism. Nuttall, Hollmen, and Staley showed that prisoners who acquired at least grade nine reading and math levels, and who were encouraged to take the GED examination, demonstrated a considerably lower level of recidivism than those who did not. Studying 16,717 prisoners, the authors determined fairly significant rates for young offenders especially, with 60% of those who achieved a GED within prison not returning to prison within 36 months after their release. For those who did not complete a GED, only 46% did not return to prison, meaning that more than half did. For older offenders, 30% of those who earned a GED returned to prison, compared to 35% of those who did not earn a GED. These findings indicate that education is especially useful with younger prisoners and even more crucial in shaping the success of youth.

⁴⁵ Emily M. Wright, Patricia Van Voorhis, Emily J. Salisbury and Ashley Bauman, “Gender-Responsive Lessons Learned and Policy Implications for Women in Prison: A Review,” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 39, (2012): 1612–1632.

Similar findings of success with recidivism rates are shown in other studies and give a good sense of the importance of education. Anderson, Anderson, and Schumacker, for example, conducted a study that utilized four groups: a vocational education program, a GED program, a combination of both vocational and GED, and a control group. They determined that those who participated, and completed, education were less likely to recidivate at the low level of 4%, compared to a 65% recidivism rate for those who did not complete a GED while in prison.⁴⁶ Porporino and Robinson's study and Jenkins, Pendry, and Steurer's study both showed extremely positive results for lowering prison recidivism rates for educational participants, especially compared to those who did not participate in any level of education. Porporino and Robinson found recidivism rates of 30.1% and 35.5% for those who participated in some level of education compared to those who did not participate, respectively. Jenkins et al.'s limited study, with one postsecondary education program, one vocational program, one GED program, and one control group, saw that post-secondary group did not recidivate within 3 years and those who participated in other educational programs, such as GED or vocational programs, had increased wages outside of prison and an overall lower recidivism rate.⁴⁷ Gordon and Weldon's study also showed that of 169 prisoners who attended vocational education, only 11 had their parole revoked, and program completers only had an 8.75% recidivism rate. Of participants who completed both a GED and vocational study, only 2 out of 24

⁴⁶ Anderson et al., "Correctional Education a Way to Get Out."

⁴⁷ H. David Jenkins, Jennifer Pendry, and Stephen J. Steurer, *A Post Release Follow-Up of Correctional Education Program Completers Released in 1990–1991* (Baltimore: Maryland State Department of Education, 1993).

prisoners recidivated compared to 26% of nonparticipants.⁴⁸ The results of these studies, thus, demonstrate that education *does* work in prison. As Taylor states:

Thus it is at least suggestive that postsecondary correctional education programs can and do assist correctional administrators in fulfilling their publicly generated and legally mandated requirements to offer educational and rehabilitation programs to those incarcerated. Critics of such programs, who have based their objections on the proposition that such programming is antithetical to the public's wish and exceeds the legal parameters of correctional administration, are—at best—misinformed in expressing their opinions. And if the critics are elected representatives—at worst, officials whose protest borders on personal ideological manifestations or on representational incompetence—than their objects make the quality of their public representation suspect.⁴⁹

Therefore, a certain level of obligation falls on the U.S. Department of Corrections and academics alike to provide educational opportunities that are needed to make prisoners excel, as implementing education works, is cost-effective, and brings the results that activists and analysts seek—the success of those in prison.

Prisoners themselves indicate that education is very important to them and believe that it provides many opportunities that they previously lacked. Unfortunately, many of those who are incarcerated come from some of the poorest neighborhoods, with severely limited educational opportunities and extremely overextended resources and staff. Once incarcerated, these struggling citizens no longer qualify for extensive government or school aid, and the harsh reality is that

60% of state inmates across the country had earned less than \$10,000 the year previous to their incarceration. In other words, if they had remained free, they would have been listed as citizens existing at, near, or even below the poverty line and, as such, they were among those most eligible (needy or deserving) for educational financial aid.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Gordon and Weldon, "The Impact of Career and Technical Education Programs on Adult Offenders (2003).

⁴⁹ Taylor, "Should Prisoners have Access to Collegiate Education?": 318.

⁵⁰ Taylor, "Should Prisoners have Access to Collegiate Education?": 320.

As a result, for many incarcerated women, this prison-education may be their first positive experience academically, and the fact that they have to enter prison to experience education is distressing. Many of the schools that they came from were characterized by what could be considered to be “prison-in-training.” Because of metal detectors, the constant presence of security guards, and even gates, high schools come to resemble the very institutions from which they should be diverting individuals.⁵¹

For these reasons, women prisoners comment on how education has propelled them forward, leading Wright to claim that, “through the connections between student and teacher, students find themselves, experience their freedom to be, accomplish their goals, and become citizens. They characterize uncaring schools as traditional, regimented, and disrespectful of the uniqueness of others.”⁵² Ceridwen and Sparks had similar experiences, with the women who they interviewed attesting to how education had transformed their lives, pointing, again, to the important contributions of education.⁵³

Because educational programming has been fairly prominent in correctional settings, it has laid the foundation for other programs that can, and should, use similar methodologies and techniques. Program evaluations conducted by the Washington and Virginia Department of Corrections provide statistical evidence, alongside those conducted in British Columbia, Ohio, and Missouri, that should persuade government officials to provide needed funding, such as educational programs.⁵⁴ These programs and studies, among others, can provide insight into how activists and advocates can work

⁵¹ Rose Braz and Myesha Williams, “Diagnosing the Schools-to-Prisons Pipeline,” (2011): guards 134, metal detectors 136, surveillance cameras, 137.

⁵² Randall Wright, “Caring and Teaching,” 205.

⁵³ Ceridwen Sparks and Anita Harris, “Vocation, vocation: A Study of Prisoner Education for Women,” 150–151.

⁵⁴ See pages 15–16 of this thesis.

within prisons. Perhaps one of the largest benefits of these programs are that they lay a template for activists to use to advocate to the Department of Corrections for why educational rehabilitation is important and works.

Lateral Contributions

Lateral contributions encompass all of the qualities of education-based programs that are, and should be, replicated in current and future programs and other educational projects, because education-based programs emphasize the importance of mental activity and self-esteem through skill building. By focusing on self-improvement, which can benefit family and community relations, such programs provide tangible results that can help individuals to become more highly employable, have more opportunities to continue education, and become positive role models to their children and other loved ones. Especially in the case of women, daughters stand to benefit a great deal from having mothers who prioritize education.

When mothers value their education, this behavior is often mirrored in the home, which provides opportunities for mutual learning between mothers and their children. As discussed later, daughters who see their mothers achieving are more likely to achieve themselves and, therefore, education needs to be emphasized for their mothers and then encouraged with the home. A great way to import education into the home is having academic behavior modeled within the household, such that successful mothers inspire their children. Additionally, education can provide opportunities to populations

that have previously been stricken with disadvantage.⁵⁵ Degrees obtained within prison provide avenues for further education outside prison and provides a stepping-stone to greater social mobility.

Not only do mothers and their daughters' benefit but society does as well. A study conducted by Lochner and Moretti (2003) determined that if high school education attainment increased by as much as 1% for African Americans, there could be a social cost savings of as much as \$1.4 billion a year.⁵⁶ Another study indicated that for every dollar spent on education for the incarcerated, society winds up saving two dollars.⁵⁷ However, when considering that most news sources (outside academia) draw attention to budget expenditures and to the necessity of control being prioritized over rehabilitation, it is not difficult to understand current carceral conditions and the responses to those who are incarcerated. Warner offers a brilliant observation how this problem occurs because of people's perceptions of individuals:

It suits the political mood to negatively stereotype them, to depict them as more violent and intractable than they are, and especially as "other" than the rest of us. We are also invited to see them one-dimensionally, only as offenders, and the over-focus on rehabilitation facilitates this narrow perspective. Other aspects of their lives and personalities, their complexities, their problems and their qualities (aspects of the whole person, in other words) are screened out. Dwelling only or mainly on the offence of the offender facilitates the ignoring of other aspects of the individual and takes attention away from how the prison itself may be criminogenic, may itself be a source of crime. How we see the prisoner is the final element to be examined.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ When using 'disadvantaged' in the context of prisoners and women, I am using it with the intention of drawing attention to the way we view and categorize these groups in relation to others.

⁵⁶ Lance Lochner and Enrico Moretti, "The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Prisoners, Arrests, and Self-Reports," *American Economic Review* 95, (2004): 155–189.

⁵⁷ Tamar Lewin, "Prisoner Education is Found to Lower Risk of New Arrest," *The New York Times*, (November 16, 2001), <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/16/us/prisoner-education-is-found-to-lower-risk-of-new-arrest.html>.

⁵⁸ Kevin Warner, "Against the Narrowing of Perspectives? How Do We See Learning, Prisons and Prisoners?" *The Journal of Correctional Education* 58, (2007): 180.

With popular opinion misunderstanding cost issues associated with extensive and long-term incarceration, society spends billions of dollars a year funding a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and incarceration. Ongoing prison exposure, as well as living in poverty, can harden individuals, diminishing their interactions and abilities to communicate effectively. The funding that is wasted on incarceration could provide necessary programs and schooling that could help millions of people to overcome the devastating effects and stigma of poverty and prison.

Tensions and Deficits

Educational programs in prison, even given their positive results and considerable contributions, are not without their downfalls. This section on tensions and deficits address shortcomings of the programs analyzed, so that they may be addressed in future projects. Although educational programs have brought considerable opportunities and experiences into prisoners' lives, there are several glaring issues at hand. The first, and most important issue, is that the overall intention of educational programs is to reduce recidivism and to keep prisoners out of prison, and the desire to make ex-prisoners "normal" risks underdeveloping important personal, artistic, and healing opportunities, and also glosses over other important issues, especially with women, such as overcoming abuse, emotional issues, drug addiction, all which relate to ongoing personal and familial trauma.⁵⁹ Prisoners need to develop ways to express themselves and to gain new skills that are not just marketable but that also develop healthy expression and reflection; "prisoners need to develop 'opportunities of exchange,' as well as literacy skills, and not

⁵⁹ Sparks and Harris, "Vocation, vocation: A Study of Prisoner Education for Women," (2005): 143–161. Grant J. Devilly, Laura Sorbello, Lynne Eccleston, Tony Ward, "Prison-based peer-education schemes," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10, (2005): 219–240.

just vocational training that prepares them for market-driven jobs, which often have grim prospects for benefits, pay scale, and employee support.”⁶⁰ Trounstine, a theater prison activist, references another activist who says that education focusing solely on “forming a right character” is questionable and extremely problematic.⁶¹ She argues that programs should not focus on normalizing issues, or on incorporating prisoners into the legal work force, because, based on studies conducted, if there is ongoing addiction, depression, or family issues, it becomes very difficult for prisoners to show up for work. Support that “normal citizens” often seek from professional providers to assist with their psychological needs is often unavailable to ex-prisoners. Having difficult, underpaid work, children and loved ones to tend to, and facing trauma or depression makes it difficult for women to succeed.

Second, programs designed for women, such as vocational training and work programs, are “primarily geared toward prison maintenance, and are traditional ‘women’s work’ in nature, such as laundry, beauty parlor and clerical work. These are limited in nature and do little to allow the prisoner to escape the cycle of poverty once released.”⁶² Because women have less developed programming, that is often available to men, often access to higher education is difficult, and the education provided in prison often does not supply the needed skills to succeed. Hence, even though studies of formal education provide statistical support for their successes, De Maeyer still concludes that education is no longer a priority in prisons, and those programs that do exist are oriented towards “professional requirements directly tailored to the needs of the market,” which, although

⁶⁰ Marc de Maeyer “Education in Prison,” *Convergence* 35 (2001): 124.

⁶¹ Jean, Trounstine, “Texts as Teachers: Shakespeare Behind Bars and Changing Lives Through Literature,” *Arts and Societal Learning* 116, (2007): 68

⁶² Marc de Maeyer, “Education in Prison,” 122.

beneficial in improving jobskills, may or may not be productive in reducing recidivism or promoting important communication skills, such as reading, writing, expressing, and preparing for employment opportunities.⁶³ Thus, although other studies indicate that there is less recidivism, there is little attention paid to the quality of life for ex-prisoners. The focus of these programs consequently seems to be to make good little workers, who, unfortunately, will likely fill low-paying jobs, with no benefits and almost no room for upward mobility. Therefore, although they no longer are imprisoned by stonewalls, former prisoners, instead, are trapped by their living situations, often with nowhere to turn and experience no relief from trying conditions. By focusing on limited skill building, educators and activists do not learn where to invest other resources that may provide long-term relief from criminal involvement, as well as from trauma and abuse.

Another criticism of many educational prison programs is that administrators stop gathering data after 3 years. Hence, although 66% of prisoners return to prison within 3 years, it is not clear what happens after 4, 5, or 10 years. Although it is understandable that funding is extremely limited and to follow up on prisoners indefinitely would be difficult, especially when they are no longer on parole, but this issue needs to be addressed. Other studies show somewhat mixed results, such as the findings from Minhyo, Cho and Tyler's study, which showed that education was beneficial in increasing income and employment opportunities for exiting prisoners, but that there were no real effects on recidivism. However, this finding was based on the study of a program that taught only adult basic education (ABE). Minhyo et al. also note that prisoners who had higher levels of education, even if not attained in prison, actually did

⁶³ Marc de Maeyer, "Education in Prison," 122.

have lower recidivism rates than those who simply participated or dropped out of ABE.⁶⁴

These findings lead to the conclusion that forms of education can be beneficial to prisoners with respect to recidivism, if education is tailored to specific needs and reflects diverse interests.

Finally, even with all the positive aspects of traditional education programs in reducing recidivism, improving job opportunities, and heightening communication abilities, the information is becoming more and more dated as funding diminishes and the opportunities for study drop, as well. Taylor's extensive information, while extremely helpful and a positive indicator of prison education, these findings are 10 or more years old. Having the unique opportunity and experiences of a prison-academic is not an easy achievement and so while positive aspects of traditional education seem numerable, as figures age, and populations change, so does the creditability of the information, therefore, educational programs face ongoing difficulties in this sense.

Because of the need for concrete statistical figures, less measurable outcomes, such as personal growth and humanistic learning experiences, are overlooked, especially when it comes to securing funding. Courses at the college level are often more expensive than are other program offerings, due to more expensive tuition, instructors, and supplies, with diminishing funding impacting the longevity of programs. However, art-based programs face fewer of these restrictions with art work being important because "these women have suffered estrangement from their families, isolation, and perhaps losses because of relationships on the inside; they are not free to express their anger and have it validated for fear of punishment, they cannot assert themselves, [...] and have very low

⁶⁴ Rosa Minhyo Cho and John H. Tyler, "Does Prison-Based Adult Basic Education Improve Postrelease Outcomes for Male Prisoners in Florida?" *Crime & Delinquency* 20, (2010): 1–31.

self-esteem stemming from years of physical and emotional abuse.”⁶⁵ As a result, creative programs might address some of the greatest downfalls of education, such as minimal expression, lower levels of communication development, and higher costs. Given these reasons, the next chapter describes the effects of artistic-education programs in institutionalized settings.

⁶⁵ Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford, “Suicide: The Challenges Faced by Female Federal Prisoners,” in *Writing as Resistance: The Journal of Prisoners on Prison Anthology (1988–2002)*, edited by Bob Gaucher, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press: 2002): 293–294.

CHAPTER III

ACHIEVING THROUGH ART EDUCATION

Traditional-education programming is not a fix-all solution for the complicated problems that plague incarcerated women. Often, the best programs not only incorporate conventional aspects of education but also the benefits of art. Ideal art programs boost participants' self-esteem through the healthy expression of ideas and values, emphasize personal potential, and teach individuals about their rights and inherent self-worth.⁶⁶ As demonstrated in this chapter, programs that weave in literature, communication skills, and art address multiple issues. By tackling the multiple facets of prison issues, activists and educators can unlock the bonds and shackles that keep the U.S. nation incarcerated. To help provide an overlay of the chapter, Table 2 summarizes the main qualities, resources, and outcomes of art programs:

⁶⁶ George Sezekly, "Art Education in Correctional Settings," *Studies in Art Education* 24, (1982): 40

Table 2. Summary of Art Programs Offerings and Implementation

Type of Intervention(s)	Theater, Art, Writing
Intervention Intentions	Skill-build artistically; encourage self-esteem building through self-expression; develop communication skills through drawing, acting, and reading; develop an appreciation for art and education
Methods	Using a variety of art mediums, participants produce individual and collaborative pieces that reflect personal experience through created and classical characters, including acting, script writing, essays, narratives, creative writing, drawing, and painting
Outcomes	Pieces for publication and display, increased self-esteem and self-expression, increased motivation to complete school and to participate in art, positive student/prisoner/facilitator relationships, better communication skills through individualistic and artistic means
Lateral Contributions	Privileges the individual experience, serves as therapy to participants, increased interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, lower in cost than instructor-led school classes, increases self-esteem, provides creative outlets, develops communication but on educational and artistic levels
Tensions & Deficits	Limited ability to provide tangible skills outside prison on art alone, often inadequate in its preparing participants for other types of programs or jobs, limited resources to network within the community

Types of Intervention(s) Used

For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on three types of prison-art programs: literary, visual, and theatrical. Although these program overlap, they typically focus more on one of the three types. I focus on programs that emphasize personal and social success because personal achievement should not always be measured quantitatively (such as employment of income levels). Leah Thorn, a creative arts activist from England, compared various prison programs, but she decided to not pursue the issue of recidivism, because such a result is affected by many factors. As Thorn states:

I decided to drop my fifth aim, which was to examine ways of determining whether creative writing projects can help reduce the likelihood of women reoffending. So many social and political factors contribute to the reduction of reoffending, that no matter how many powerful stories are shared of growth of self-esteem and of self-awareness, it is hard in an evidence based system to quantify the specific contribution of creativity.

Because of similar assessments, it is difficult to determine the exact contributions of creative art programs using quantitative procedures, but most indicators seem to point in a positive direction, and Leah Thorn, in her most recent review of art programs in the United Kingdom and in the United States, offers a strong assessment of the worth of such programs.⁶⁷

Visual Art

Art is effective in therapeutic settings, because for those who struggle with emotional, physical, or mental trauma, what cannot always be expressed in words can often be created in pictures.⁶⁸ Among women prisoners, over 50% have been victim to some form of abuse within the prior 10 years before being in prison; over 66% of female prisoners are mothers, and the psychological and emotional pain that they face when separated from their children is considerable.⁶⁹ As a result, untold emotions ripple below what are already turbulent waters. Art can address these issues, especially for those who have faced a high level of economic and social disadvantage, and who did not have

⁶⁷ Leah Thorn, “Naked State: Creativity and the Empowerment of Incarcerated Women and Girls, a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship Report by Leah Thorn,” (2012).

⁶⁸ Beth Merriam, “To Find a Voice,” *Women & Therapy* 21, (1998): 138.

⁶⁹ Doris J. James, “Bureau of Justice Special Report: Profile of Jail Prisoners, 2002,” *U.S Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs*, July 2004, accessed at:

<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/pji02.pdf>; Institute of Women & Criminal Justice, “Quick Facts: Women & Criminal Justice –2009,” accessed February 3, 2013 at:
http://www.wpaonline.org/pdf/Quick%20Facts%20Women%20and%20CJ_Sept09.pdf.

access to these types of programs prior to incarceration.⁷⁰ Many prisoners can identify with the economic and other disadvantages that they faced prior to prison. As Tiffanee O. writes:

I looked up at the police towering over me as they rushed my Mom through her packing. I was crying as they took me out the door, on my way to my first foster home [...] during those four years I experienced things no kid should. For a while we were homeless, then we lived in a tent; we eventually ended up in a town-room shack with no running water [...] I dropped out of school and spend my days smoking weed and meth with my parents and their friends.⁷¹

As a result, women, such as Tiffanee, have so many stories to tell, but they are often at a loss of words. By using art, these women can push themselves to share and explore what they have been through and where they would like to be in life.

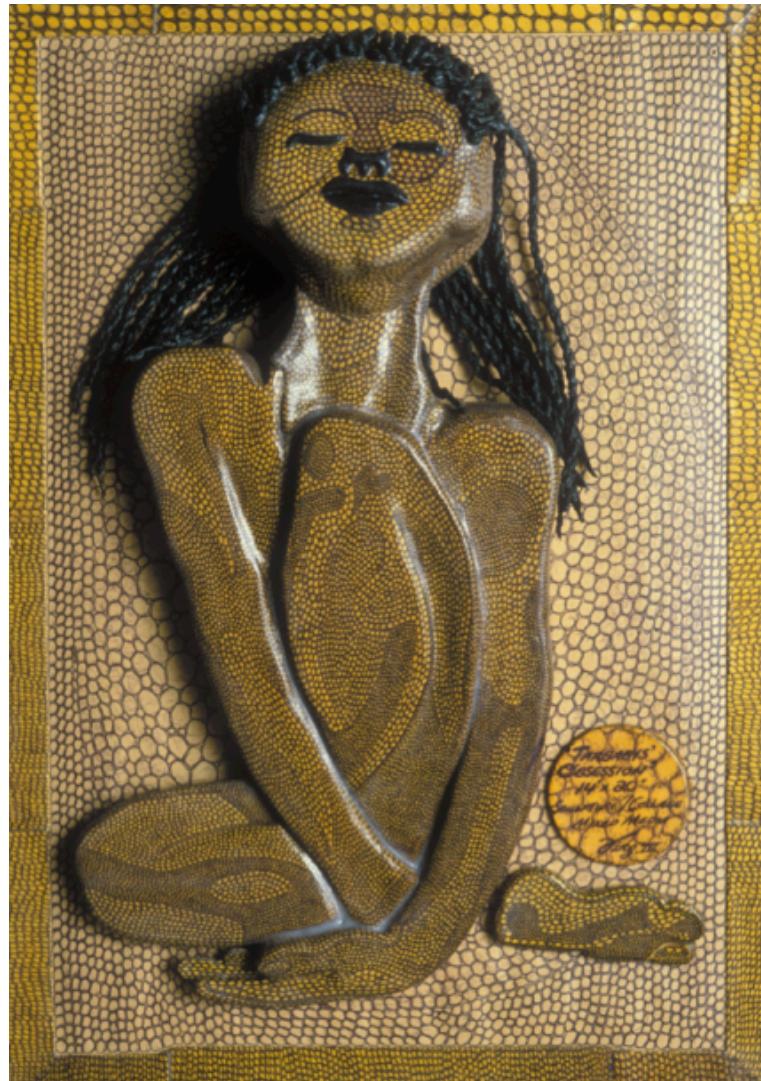
Prisoners often use visual means to express themselves, not only through images drawn but also through angry or happy strokes, colors, and mediums that they choose.⁷² Some artists, who do not have access to many courses, use limited materials, but they still create projects with things such as toilet paper and cardboard, showing that art can be created and fostered anywhere. For instance, Figure 1, a piece created by a Michigan prisoner, Virgil Williams III, shows the ingenuity of the human spirit in creating his remarkable work “Tar Baby’s Obsession”:

⁷⁰ Paul Clements, “The Rehabilitative Role of Arts Education in Prison: Accommodation or Enlightenment?” *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 23, (2004): 169-178.

⁷¹ Tiffanee O., “The Promise,” *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 10, (2012): 2-3.

⁷² David Gussak, “Art Therapy with Prison Prisoners: A Pilot Study,” *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 31, (2009): 245-259; Persons, “Art Therapy with Serious Juvenile Defenders,” (2009).

Figure 1. “Tar Baby’s Obsession”



*Made completely out of layered paper, pen, toilet paper, and shoe polish, the artist created something beautiful in an ugly place.*⁷³

Such a stunning piece, constructed of simple materials that the artist had in his cell showed the imagination, talent, and potential that Virgil has beyond prison. Prisoners who have faced considerable disadvantage, many in prison for life, show their strength of spirit through what they create, and Virgil is an example of that. The meditative quality

⁷³ Virgil Williams III, “Tarbaby’s Obsession,” in *Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex*, edited by Stephen John Hartnett (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), center photo insert.

of arts can therefore, can showcase amazing talents. Although not all prison drawings and projects are as breathtaking, the underlying creativity and communication skill building within art provide skills to the talented and dedicated alike.

In more structured courses, things such as pastels, and pencil crayons, are offered as standard materials, as noted in Gussak's studies, as well as Venable's and Person's work with juvenile offenders.⁷⁴ Art therapy also uses drawing, painting, and clay modeling, and some even have the resources to offer multiple mediums at once.⁷⁵ As a result, prisoners are offered a variety of opportunities to explore their lives through these arts programs. Other programs using similar techniques bring these visual characters to life, through theater.

Theater

Theatrical work has become a big part of art programs offered to prisoners. The beauty of acting-based courses is that they lead prisoners to develop characters representing who they are now and who they would like to be in life.⁷⁶ Moreover, theater courses create a sense of community because participants work towards the same goal: the big opening night. Demanding participants' cooperation, theater programs develop stronger positive interpersonal, and less hostile relationships among prisoners, and they give prisoners the opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas in a productive manner.⁷⁷ Prisoners who are prone to aggression or even have mental health issues will enter such

⁷⁴ David Gussak, "Art Therapy with Prison Prisoners: A Pilot Study," *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 31, (2009): 245-259; Persons, "Art Therapy with Serious Juvenile Offenders," (2009); Bradford B. Venable "At-Risk and In-Need: Reaching Juvenile Offenders through Art," *Art Education* 58, (2005): 48-53.

⁷⁵ Merriam, "To Find A Voice," 159

⁷⁶ Trounstine, "Texts as Teachers," 71.

⁷⁷ Jean Trounstine, *Shakespeare Behind Bars: One Teacher's Story of the Power of Drama in a Women's Prison* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2004).

courses ready to be a team member and to overlook differences between themselves and others, even putting aside their internal struggles to continue performing.⁷⁸ Prisoners who have behavioral problems also monitor their behavior to be able to continue to participate.⁷⁹

A variety of techniques are emphasized in performance-based workshops, and, depending on the population being worked with, some activities are more appropriate than are others. For instance, Kanter's project specialized in working with prisoners who had mental health issues; consequently, it employed techniques that were interactive and individualized, such as name games and role playing; an even stronger focus on cooperation was necessary, as the variety of symptoms evidenced among participants, made relationships and projects difficult to orchestrate without full group support and participation.⁸⁰ For the workshop to be successful, prisoners had to be aware of each other's needs and concerns, and they had to coordinate and incorporate that awareness into their behavior, with the end result being aliberation and a realization, for the program designer, that not all courses must be structured to help prisoners. As Kanter explained:

theater games were only a first step toward Forum Theater, a space for democratic dialogue about national and international problems—political oppression, poverty, and violence. Although we did a small amount of Forum Theater in the prison, the inmates resisted this work as a path to liberation. What was liberating for the inmates was not dialogue, but play. Through the workshops, we came to understand that play, for the inmates, was not merely fun—it was the only way to be free.⁸¹

For this program, success occurred by using activities that were directly suited to

⁷⁸ As will be delineated in Kanter, Shailor, and Trounstine's theater work.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Shailor, "When Muddy Flowers Bloom: The Shakespeare Project at Racine Correctional Institution," *PMLA* 123, (2008): 632-641; Trounstine, "Texts as Teachers," 70.

⁸⁰ Jodi Kanter, "Disciplined Bodies at Play: Improvisation in a Federal Prison," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 7, (2007): 378-396.

⁸¹ Kanter, "Disciplined Bodies at Play" 394.

prisoners' needs, which reflected not a disinterest in public performance but, instead, a focus on interaction and self-expression through healthy and spontaneous, but guided, activities.

However, the majority of the other programs, although emphasizing personal expression and involvement, typically had theatrical performances planned for the end of the workshop. As a result, prisoners had a tangible goal to work toward, which made these educational programs especially effective in terms of motivating students to succeed. In many cases, a play would be chosen. Certain programs made use of famous performances, such as those written by Shakespeare, so as to not only teach performance, memorization, and participation but also to provide an access point to extremely important and influential literature. Jonathan Shailor and Jean Trounstine, for instance, are active in this type of activism education, using reading, writing, and performing to inspire participants to their personal best. As Shailor and Trounstine explain:

Theatre provides opportunities then for performers to become more self-aware, to expand their sense of what it means to be human, to develop empathy, and to exercise their moral imaginations (by developing their understanding of what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful.⁸²

By working through complicated ideas and vocabularies, participants broadened their horizons when it came to effective and poetic communication, which can translate into other aspects of their lives.⁸³

Fundamental to the success of these programs is the development of participants' communication skills and cooperation. For prisoners to work productively together, they

⁸² Jonathan Shailor (ed). "Theatre of Empowerment," *Performing New Lives: Prison Theatre*, (United Kingdom: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, (2010): 22.

⁸³ Trounstine, *Shakespeare Behind Bars: One Teacher's Story of the Power of Drama in a Women's Prison*, 182-183.

had to work on personal issues and, simultaneously, prioritize the needs of those within their group. Such socializing can be difficult in a prison setting, which fosters antisocial behavior in its very nature. Expecting prisoners, who can spend decades steeling themselves against pain and harm, to put those issues aside to collaborate in a very uncooperative environment is a hard expectation to have; however, it is absolutely necessary to do so for programs to be successful. No performance can occur if participants have not committed to their characters, often representations of themselves, and “theatre provides opportunities then for performers to become more self-aware, to expand their sense of what it means to be human, to develop empathy, and to exercise their moral imaginations (by developing their understanding of what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful).”⁸⁴ As a result, theater has the power to create meaningful change by amplifying participants’ positive attributes.

Although a primary focus of theatre is on creating bonds between prisoners, there is also an underlying theme in these programs: how to project a voice through a variety of communication skills. Theater can bridge a gap between emotion and character, but for others, creating the plotline is what matters. Therefore, as explained below, for some, writing may be the answer for which they are looking.⁸⁵

Writing

Writing is one of the most frequent and cost-effective means of bringing arts education to prison. Writing workshops typically focus on improving the written and spoken word, and they use a variety of techniques to improve participants’ abilities,

⁸⁴ Shailor, “Theatre of Empowerment,” 22.

⁸⁵ “Philosophy and Curriculum,” *Truth Be Told: Transformative Programs For Women Behind Bars & Beyond*, (2013), accessed March 6, 2013 at: <http://truth-be-told.org/programs/>

ranging from traditional literature and public speaking courses offered at the college level to community and individual or collaborative poetry, narratives, and/or written plays. Using prominent literature along with personal poetry collected from previous participants, programs build off the successes of other programs and offer crucial skills that aid personal and social development. As with theater programs, writing programs collaboratively require group participation and enthusiasm. For example, in University Colorado's writing course at the DWCF, we wrote a group poem, called "One Voice," that shared our personal and group experiences and dreams; doing so was possible only through the collaboration, conversations, and passion of all participants.⁸⁶

A person's improved communication allows her to improve her life in many ways. For some, writing is a beacon of home in their life, and helps them to retell stories about the choices that did, and continue to, plague their lives. In Corey's project, prisoners relabeled themselves from criminals to creators, which helped them to envision themselves as writers instead of as felons.⁸⁷ Women publishers in the volumes of *Captured Words* see themselves not as criminals but as survivors with potential. As Claudia writes: "I can see the light and purpose in my life. If I want to work and go to college to become a career woman"; Tiffanee writes, "I am taking full opportunity of the classes and programs that will move me forward"; and Michelle rallies for pro-female politics in her poems.⁸⁸ Another prisoner, from another writing project, emphasizes the

⁸⁶ Parker Bremner, Arian Carney, Liz Casillas, Natalie Ealy, Janiece Ferguson, Dayle Garfield, Latisha Garrett, Danielle Gonzalez, Linda Guthrie, Tabitha Highsmith, Alyssa Kurtz, Claudia Liria Manriquez, Tiffany Maestas, Samantha Miles, Anita Montoya, Michelle Moore, Tina Moya, Anh Nguyen, Tiffanee O, Nicole Palidwor, Mysti Perkins, Alex Rowan, and Misty Saribal, "One Voice," *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 10, (2012): 16-17.

⁸⁷ Frederick C. Corey, "Personal Narratives and Young Men in Prison: Labeling the Outside Inside," *Western Journal of Communication* 60, (1996).

⁸⁸ Tiffanee O. "The Promise," Claudia Liria Manriquez, "Hear me Roar," Michelle Moore, "End the Wall Flower Movement," *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 10, (2012): 5, 12, 10

absolute necessity of writing: “Grief is too present in my life. I have to start writing this story or die.”⁸⁹ Through this storytelling, prisoners, women, specifically, can explore their lives from different vantage points and fully develop their abilities and, ultimately, their dreams.

Through narratives, prisoners tell their stories from a variety of perspectives and understand more about themselves and others. Prison art courses provide opportunities to “explore their latent feelings,” and writing courses are an “avenue for personal reflection that would provide a voice for their [prisoners] past and futures. It seemed it would give meaning to their lives.”⁹⁰ However, as much as activists and educators want to offer academic skills, it is important to recognize the individuality of each prisoner and how various communication styles have the potential to represent prisoners’ lives and struggles.⁹¹ Traditional styles of academic writing, therefore, must give way to the creative at times. Poetry can help people develop an extensive vocabulary and an understanding of rhyme, rhythm, and overall presentation and so can other creative writing (narratives, stories, etc.). Generally, the results of these educational writing programs have the potential to be powerful, and, as noted previously, women from the Denver Women’s Correctional Facility are a testament to that potential and power.

Intervention Intentions

Ultimately, art-based programs focus on three crucial things: self-esteem, self-expression, and developing communication skills. By providing the necessary tools, art

⁸⁹ Jo-Ann Mayhew, “The Bear and Me,” in *Writing as Resistance: The Journal of Prisoners on Prison Anthology (1988-2002)*, edited by Bob Gaucher, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press: 2002): 299.

⁹⁰ Gregory Shafer, “Composition and a Prison Community of women Writers,” *The English Journal* 90, (2001): 76.

⁹¹ Shafer, “Composition,” 80.

programs create avenues of change in people's relationships, goals, and life paths.⁹² Prisoners with difficult pasts can often more easily reflect and share their life stories through art than through other means, earning self-respect, and learning hope when their work is recognized. Incarcerated women also use art to engage in emotional release, something that they have not been privileged to elsewhere.⁹³ Self-esteem is built through this process of self-expression, allowing prisoners to take on new identities.⁹⁴ Traditional-educational programs typically have more structured curricula than do art programs, and, for inmates, art programs bring a welcome change in their lives because of the other characteristics of life on which art focuses.

Prisoners enact change through participating in art and program providers, and they emphasize that in their efforts and creations. Several women prisoners comment on how, through writing, they are using artistic tools to share with others, helping to spread communication and to build relationships. As G. Kelly-Darden says: "I desire to create "tools" for those who are faced with unsuspecting challenges in all the high crime areas of the nation."⁹⁵ Female prisoners want to help others empower themselves through art and art programmers facilitate this goal: "By sharing my words and experiences I intend to reach those who have felt the exact hurt I express and, in doing so, prevent them from making the same (or similar) mistakes."⁹⁶ Another prisoner hopes that "whoever reads my words will want to speak up and share the experiences to help the next person."⁹⁷

⁹² Kristin Bervig Valentine, "If the Guards Only Knew": Communication Education for Women in Prison," *Women Studies in Communication* 21, (1998): 241.

⁹³ Jacquelyn Bond, "Violence & Loss," *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 8, (2009): 9; Corey, "Personal Narratives in Prison," (1996).

⁹⁴ Frederick C. Corey, "Personal Narratives and Young Men in Prison: Labeling the Outside Inside," 60.

⁹⁵ G. Kelly-Darden, *Tenacious: Art & Writings by Women in Prison* 23, (2011): 4.

⁹⁶ Kelly-Darden, *Tenacious* 23, (2011): 4.

⁹⁷ Ms. Janise Leonard, *Tenacious* 23, (2011): 11.

Women emote through their artwork and they become more eager to share their story, which, as previously mentioned, is foundational in increasing self-esteem and communication skills. Shafer writes that although

most high school and college students approach writing as a way to acquire the academic skills needed to survive in the society in which they hope to flourish, these unique pupils approach it as a precious gift that can help give voice to their feelings of consternation, alienation, and pain-feelings that erupt in founts of warm emotion.⁹⁸

By putting pen to paper, prisoners explore their pasts and their possible futures, which helps them to develop a better sense of self and encourages them to be self-advocates in other aspects of their lives. Art programs encourage self-expression of the trauma that many prisoners have experienced in their lives. As mentioned, female prisoners have been exposed to high levels of abuse and victimization, and they often have remained silent for decades. Family abuse, followed by partner abuse, keeps these women muted, and often results in their incarceration.⁹⁹

Specific Work Expectations

Programs, such as those offered by Gussak, Venable, Trounstine, and Shailor typically share the same ultimate goal: the production of prose, painting, or performance. Participants use a variety of mediums and styles to complete their projects. Some programs insist that no matter how artists feel about their work; they cannot start over but have to finish it, because they believe that incarcerated youth have a great vision to be

⁹⁸ Shafer, “Composition,” (2001): 75

⁹⁹ Melissa Stewart, “Prisons for Women’s Invisible Minority,” in *Writing as Resistance: The Journal of Prisoners on Prison Anthology (1988-2002)*, edited by Bob Gaucher, (Toronto, Canadian Scholars’ Press: 2002): 169.

pushed forward and should not be abandoned when frustrated.¹⁰⁰ Artistic abilities range, and a wide variety of mediums are used, and the result of each project, although varying in skill level, is representative of the variety of experiences that the youth had lived through.¹⁰¹ Even with the evolutionary aspects of art, participants are hesitant to fully commit to any extracurricular activities because of the very nature of prison. Deal found, in her creative arts course offered in prison, that many prisoner participants would come and go because of various prison restrictions that were associated with overall prison behavior, work, and other facility requirements.¹⁰² Courses have to be flexible, and, often, program providers explore only one idea per class session to make sure that new and returning participants stand an equal chance of excelling.¹⁰³

Within theater programs, such as Shailor and Trounstine's, prisoners memorize lines to develop a clear understanding of the dialogue being used, the intentions behind each character, and the prose and rhythm of the piece itself. Prisoners have to be able to connect to the character and to participate to create a production.¹⁰⁴ In theater, if a single character is not completely committed to the play, it may not meet its full potential. For individual success to be achieved in a theater workshop, the group must come first. No one will take pride in a play that falls apart because of lack of commitment on behalf of the participants. Therefore, theater programs can build community alongside developing important written, spoken, and presentational skills.

¹⁰⁰ Venable "At-Risk and In-Need" 48-53.

¹⁰¹ Sezekly, "Art Education," 41.

¹⁰² Claire E. Deal, "Acting for Social Justice: Students, Prisoners, and Theater of Testimony Performance," in L. R. Frey & D. L. Palmer (Eds.), *Teaching communication activism*. (New York, Hampton Press: in progress).

¹⁰³ Sezekly, "Art Education," (1982): 38; Corey, "Personal Narratives in Prison," (1996): 60.

¹⁰⁴ Shailor, "Muddy Waters," (2008); Trounstine, "Beyond Prison Education," (2008); Claire E. Deal, "Acting for Social Justice: Students, Prisoners, and Theater of Testimony Performance," (in progress); (Also: Detailed later on, the work of Buzz Alexander and PCAP, emphasize the importance of flexibility and creativity in workshop design and implementation.

Writing workshops have the expectation that all required readings will be done and that the writing responds to the task or prompt assigned. Students are expected to write a certain number of pieces that fit certain formats, although page lengths can vary.¹⁰⁵ Students have to be open and receptive to feedback, which means that numerous drafts—all written by hand—are necessary, even when this lengthy process frustrates students.¹⁰⁶ In my experience, however, students are eager to have their work responded to, and deviations from rigid syllabi bring dynamism to class sessions. Often, a piece that seems appropriate at the beginning of the course turns out to not be appropriate for the class environment. Although some courses encourage short stories and essays, some participants work in poetry, and others focus on academic writing to pursue school or art outside of prison. The development of all of these skills, as demonstrated in Deal’s and Shafer’s studies, as well as that with *Captured Words Free Thoughts*, often result in amazing written and spoken pieces.

Methods

Art program methods incorporate academic expectations, as well as emphasize the importance of emotional healing. Artistically gifted citizens and academics team up to help prisoners discover their artistic skills. Instructors collaborate with prisoners to help them draw individual and group pieces.¹⁰⁷ When in an institutionalized setting, cooperation is difficult, because prisoners have been conditioned to “learn fear,

¹⁰⁵ Shafer, “Composition,” 75.

¹⁰⁶ Shafer, “Composition,” 79

¹⁰⁷ Venable, (2005); Trounstein, (2001, 2007, 2008); Shailor, (2008).

submission, dependence, and despair; new forms of physical and emotional violence,” and to trust others can prove to be dangerous.¹⁰⁸

Those who run theater workshops develop a script, or use an existing but often modified one, and they practice repeating lines not just verbally but also dynamically. Those who develop such programs help students to develop their characters, or to better understand the charterers that they choose to play. Prisoners work with one another to develop lines and general themes, or, in more structured plays, they help one another to conceptualize what can be difficult concepts. All of this work is done to produce a well-rounded production.¹⁰⁹ Instructors also use warm-up activities to encourage self-expression and to create community, which helps class members to feel comfortable and willing to engage.¹¹⁰ Other methodologies include using humor, demonstrating appreciation and respect for others, and a variety of tasks that develop the imagination and foster creativity.¹¹¹ Buell, another theater activist, explains that theater workshops involve

discussion, improvisation, storytelling, voice work, movement and writing exercises. These established a dialogue that examined familial, social, and societal relationships. A class plan outlined the introductory exercises and questions used to begin building theatre/movement skills, and develop camaraderie between the members.¹¹²

By incorporating a variety of elements of theater, prisoners and facilitators develop better relationships, which impacts the class environment and dynamics among participants.

¹⁰⁸ Shailor, “Muddy Waters,” 641.

¹⁰⁹ Shailor, “Muddy Waters,” 636; Trounstine, “Texts as Teachers,” 70

¹¹⁰ Eleanor Novek, “The Alternative to Violence Project’s Work for Peace Behind Bars,” *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 22, (2011): 337.

¹¹¹ Shailor, “Muddy Waters,” 634.

¹¹² Brent Buell, “Rehabilitation Through the Arts,” in *Performing New Lives: Prison Theatre*, edited by Jonathan Shailor, (United Kingdom: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010): 61.

Art courses that involve drawing, painting, and occasional sculpture provide another avenue for expression for those who, typically, have been most silenced in society. Women, who primarily make up the prisoner population because of drug addiction and assault against partners who have abused them, use art to work through their thoughts and feelings.¹¹³ The women at Lac Du Bonnet, who expected to pursue traditional-educational based courses, initially balked at the thought of doing art, but they all quickly realized their talent and the satisfaction that it brought them. Several of the women felt passionate about their heritage, and they spoke with pride about their art on display. Other women were obsessed with detail and perfection, perhaps an example of the only control they have over their lives, given the grim circumstances facing them.

Finally, writing courses use a variety of warm-up methods, class discussions, and textual analyses to encourage creativity and story development. Understanding key themes in important literature, and techniques, such as a foreshadowing and proper development of a vignette, are used to capture readers' attention.¹¹⁴ Using course literature, personal writings, and the writings of other prisoners, writing courses develop the written and verbal word. Written communication skills are applicable outside the facility. By combining the best of written programs, such as Deal's creative arts course and Novek's newspaper writing course, alongside theatrical projects, such as those offered by Buell, Trounstine, and Shailor, with an additional focus on the importance of visual arts, such as those demonstrated in Gussak and Venable's work, outcomes, as explained below, include personal growth, success, and academic achievement.

¹¹³ Latisha Garrett, "My Long Road From Morton, Texas to Denver, Colorado," *Captured Words* 10, (2012): 19; Tina Moya, "Monsters," *Captured Words* 10 (2012): 24.

¹¹⁴ Shafer, "Composition," 80.

Outcomes

The outcomes of these art-prison programs are diverse but demonstrate many similarities. In line with their intention, educators and participants alike agree that these programs foster participants' self-esteem and expression. Shailor's work on Theater of Empowerment, based in Wisconsin, summarizes well the intended outcomes of theater programs, which are applicable to the other programs:

the empowerment of the individual (an increased sense of dignity, discipline, creativity, and capability); the development of relational responsibility (the practice of empathy and establishing good working relationships); and the cultivation of one's moral imagination (a critical and compassionate understanding of the psychological, historical, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of our shared humanity).¹¹⁵

The incorporation of art to foster personal change has proven to be powerful. Many prisoner participants are quoted as saying that these programs were meaningful and brought something to their lives that previously had been absent. Male prisoners felt proud of the skills that they developed and appreciated the learning environment offered by Corey's writing course, even if shortcomings included the class sessions being too short and too infrequent.¹¹⁶ Women writers from across the United States contribute to *Tenacious: Art & Writings by Women in Prison*, a program that distributes prisoners' writings across the country. Authors within the publication comment on their desire to be no longer silenced;¹¹⁷ others did not "want to be anonymous."¹¹⁸ Instead, as Rachel Galindo, a prisoner, states, "Writing has been a continual part of unlearning silence and invisibility as it counters repression."¹¹⁹ Voice is a key point in many of these women's

¹¹⁵ Shailor, "Muddy Waters," 634.

¹¹⁶ Corey, "Male Narratives in Prison," 61.

¹¹⁷ Nicky Riley, "When Love hurts," *Tenacious* 23, (2011): 18; Leonard, *Tenacious* 23, (2011): 11.

¹¹⁸ Kelly-Darden, *Tenacious* 23, (2011): 4.

¹¹⁹ Galindo, *Tenacious* 23, (2011): 12.

writings and is emphasized as being extremely important. All of these women acknowledge the importance of having a voice that others may hear and that “this is the importance of writing. It is neither static nor a one-sided activity. It lends forceful hand of connection through reaching out and receiving.”¹²⁰

Prisoners within these programs value the experience for numerous reasons. Gilcrease, a female prisoner, comments, “I learned to express myself on paper and I’m starting to find the real Rhonda that was so lost so many years ago.”¹²¹ Women achieve a new sense of self through writing. Valentine emphasizes the importance of character development, because characters or speakers in literature can reflect feelings that normally are concealed within prison. These communication-oriented prison programs encourage imagination and liberating discourses. Trounstine writes that in her experience with women performing Shakespeare, participants evolve through their immersion in the material and workshop, and that

change happens when we read a book and a character sits inside us and becomes a role model. It is what occurs when we put aside our troubles, jump onstage to take part in an improvisation, and within moments find we are lost in the world we’re creating. It is not always behavioral. Sometimes change is as small as an emotional half smile, the tilt of a head in response to a new idea. But in my prison classes, drama enabled the women to believe more deeply in their abilities, to use their risk-taking nature in ways that were productive and to create a community where they valued themselves and others.¹²²

Writing and then performing their poetry gives incarcerated women a measure of control over their otherwise regimented bodies, which results in deep and moving written, spoken, and acted pieces.¹²³ Within acting, Trounstine also comments that participants felt freed from “demons” and that acting helped them to become less shy and involved in

¹²⁰ Galindo, *Tenacious* 23, 13.

¹²¹ Gilcrease, *Tenacious* 23, 16.

¹²² Jean Trounstine, *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, 236.

¹²³ Valentine, “If the Guards Only Knew,” 241.

workshops.¹²⁴ Deal notes that participants had improved confidence and valued their opportunity to share themselves with each other and with the audience, even receiving compliments from officers and staff.¹²⁵ Therefore, it is evident that outcomes of these programs include not only self-expression and self-esteem building but also the powerful impacts that new communication can have on the self and in new and existing relationships.

By creating these artistic expressions, women are finding a sense of self and freedom. Sally Gearhart, a prominent scholar in critical theory and feminism, noted that there are opportunities to create meaningful change from “writing stories, singing songs, playing parts, dreaming dreams, and dancing dances.”¹²⁶ Bond, another prisoner, and a victim of abuse, pledges to walk beyond the walls of prison and to take her place in stopping the cycle of violence saying, “I will find somewhere that I can volunteer, speaking to, and maybe even counseling, youth at risk, gang bangers in juveniles halls, or kids in group homes.”¹²⁷ Participants in the variety of programs discussed here learn that

they were heard, and they discovered that their opinions held weight. Participants reported that each person’s experience led him to his own way of seeing the same text. Instead of seeing their world from only one angle, they began opening up to new points of view, gained confidence, became more articulate, and started realizing they had more choices in life. Equally profound were the experiences of the judge, POs, and professor, who also reported having been changed by the class.¹²⁸

Students embrace these courses with enthusiasm, and facilitators see how participants use language to engage and empower themselves. Shafer writes that, for prisoners,

¹²⁴ Trounstine, “Beyond Prison Education,” 675.

¹²⁵ Deal, “Acting for Social Justice,” (in progress).

¹²⁶ Quoted in Nancy Jesser, “Gearhart, Sally Miller,” *Feminist Writers*, ed. Pamela Kester-Shelton (Detroit: St James: 1996): 193.

¹²⁷ Bond, *Captured Words* 8, 10.

¹²⁸ Trounstine, “Texts as Teachers,” 74.

their papers seemed fundamental and life-affirming. With their language students were making their pain and mistakes real and telling their side of a story that had gone untold for too long. It was a true testament to the liberating efficacy of process, student-centered writing, and the basic need for language. In the end, it evinced a natural love of expression that all composition teachers should acknowledge. When students are empowered to write about those issues that resonate in their lives-and isn't that what all of us write about-they are both enthusiastic and articulate.¹²⁹

The power of art, thus, has no boundaries and can free many minds from shackles, and not just prisoners. The arts also provide women with the opportunity to explore sentiments that they had locked away.

A particularly meaningful outcome is the ongoing publications that result from creative arts projects. In several states, prisoners create and contribute their work to a variety of magazines that are published and distributed across the country, and even internationally. Prisoners, even those who do not have access to courses, contribute their work to a variety of these magazines. Some magazines work, specifically, in certain prisons; others are an entity onto themselves and have no institutional borders between themselves and prisoners' writing, and they can have wide dissemination and support.¹³⁰

Many women within *Captured Words* express their deepest heartaches, but also their hope. Tiffanee O. writes that she is "learning the lessons of forgiveness and love. I am drug free. I will never again start another relationship with a man who is an addict, is violent, or does not respect me or my daughters." Michelle Moore makes a rallying cry to other women: "Women have the opportunity to accelerate progress if only we stand up and create a united voice." Alyssa Kurtz, in *A Woman's Prerogative*, expresses a similar sentiment: "The only person we have to please is ourselves, so let us disregard the

¹²⁹ Shafer, "Compositions," 78.

¹³⁰ For a comprehensive list of programs that publish and distribute prison art work: www.prisonartscoalition.org.

messages the world sends us and become what makes us happy.”¹³¹ Women, even when pitted against one another in a place like prison, still want to reach out to others and develop unity, which helps everyone to move forward. To foster these bonds, publications that spread these sentiments and rallying cries, such as *Captured Words* and *Tenacious*, are extremely important.

For those who participate in theater, press coverage in local newspapers, as prestigious as *The New York Times*, show pictures of the big night, which helps to garner resources and support from other communities.¹³² Collaborative work among prisoners can create personal bridges between participants.¹³³ Stories reflecting other prisoners' struggles also provide the opportunity to relate to one another. This sharing process creates ties among participants, and between participants and observers, which encourages other women to write because of their ability to relate to the artist. When prisoners develop relationships with one another, they are in a better situation to express themselves in an environment of understanding. Buells found that one of the participant's grandmothers, in a particular workshop, had passed away and that the actor was devastated because he would be unable to attend her funeral. Buells saw within his workshop that it

was one warm human heart pouring itself out to another in order have pain be less. The men wanted to know what his grandmother was like, what he had cared for in her, and what qualities she had encouraged in him. And then, in the most natural way, they spoke about how they wanted to keep encouraging those things in him and hoped to be able to provide him with some of the strength and wisdom

¹³¹ Tiffanee O. “The Promise”; Michelle Moore, “Stop the Wall Flower Movement”; Alyssa Kurtz, “A Woman’s Prerogative”; *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 10, (2012): 3, 11, 12.

¹³² Shailor, “Muddy Waters,” (2008): 637; Nina Billone, “Performing Civil Death: The Medea Project and Theater for Incarcerated Women,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29, (2009): 266; Brent Buell, “Rehabilitation Through the Arts,” 51.

¹³³ Eleanor M. Novek, “Heaven, Hell, and Here.”

that he had gotten from her. The spirit of men who were in the room that night was the kind of spirit I would like to have in my community.¹³⁴

The fact that these programs can create a community in *prison* that is reminiscent of relationships outside prison is astonishing. Against all administrative, political, and economical odds, prisoner participants thus find a way to relate to and to change their lives for the better.

Prison-art programs definitely instill a sense of pride in the artists because, for many of them their opinions were ignored by partners and loved ones, let alone by strangers. When artwork is purchased or circulated in magazines, prisoners' voices travel through the razor wire into a world beyond the concrete walls that trap them. Numerous prisoners, as previously noted, comment that these opportunities have changed their lives and have given them a sense of self-value that they do not see in themselves prior to those experiences. Although these successes are only a fraction of prisoners, the potential of art and expression cannot go underlined.

Lateral Contributions

Prison-art programs build on the successes of traditional-education programs by providing educational and intellectual opportunities, and, simultaneously, by focusing more extensively on self-esteem building through expression, healing, and the expansion of communication skills.¹³⁵ Although standard education develops self-esteem through accomplishments and increased employability and economic opportunity in the world, frequently, it does not help participants to cope with the considerable stresses and issues

¹³⁴ Brent Buell, "Rehabilitation Through the Arts," 65.

¹³⁵ Sezekly, "Art Education," (1982): 39; Rachel Williams and Janette Y. Taylor, "Narrative Art and Incarcerated Abused Women," *Art Education* 57, (2004): 46-52.

that they have faced prior to, and while in, prison. Often, education is intended to be remedial within prison, but it is not a panacea for the multiple symptoms facing women prisoners. Prisoners, attaining a GED or high school diploma may be more employable on paper, but if they cannot readily cope with physical and emotional abuse, that educational work amounts to nothing. Mullen, however, found that prisoners who use art as self-expression were better able to overcome things such as self-esteem issues, stress, and frustration when they are challenged in new and productive ways.¹³⁶ Trounstine states that by working through complicated characters and roles, performers can “investigate and explore new aspects of themselves, as well as increase their ability to communicate,” even if that means pushing beyond people’s comfort zones. Therefore, the emotional work being done within art courses can be a potential game changer when it comes to women’s success outside of prison walls.¹³⁷

Not only does art help prisoners, but art also draws domestic and international viewers and subscribers to art shows and publications.¹³⁸ Once individuals are exposed to the intricacies and horrors that are part of extended incarceration, they become engaged and interested in addressing the issue. Some activists, such as Trounstine, found that students at the local college wanted to study certain plays because the prisoners did.¹³⁹ Often, with educational programs, there is no outside support, partially because society may not see the rewards of prison education, and as mentioned previously, many citizens

¹³⁶ Carol A. Mullen, “Reaching Inside Out: Arts-Based Educational Programming for Incarcerated Women,” *Studies in Art Education* 40, (1999): 158.

¹³⁷ Trounstine, “Texts as Teachers,” 74.

¹³⁸ For a comprehensive list of programs that publish and distribute prison art work: www.prisonartscollition.org.

¹³⁹ Trounstine, “Texts as Teachers,” 71.

actually think that such education is a waste of money.¹⁴⁰ As a production-focused society, art provides tangible proof of prisoners' progress and self-realization, and, often, prison artists will evolve over time and their work becomes desirable by those outside prison walls.¹⁴¹ Additionally, as mentioned in the section of this chapter on education, prisoners enjoy being part of the teaching process, knowing that helping others is not only good for those they help but that it also brings purpose to mentors' lives, which further fuels self-improvement.¹⁴²

Art often combines the best of the creative and the educational, becoming a revolutionary tool for women. Women with whom I have worked politicize their writings and seek to accomplish change. Anita Montoya writes about the terrible effects of fast food on children and adults, Stella O' Neal writes about the necessity of improving education, especially for minority groups, and Michelle Moore comments on feminist issues.¹⁴³ Such messages are also evidenced in the writings of art publications across the United States. Sarah Jo Pender, who has published in *Tenacious: Art & Writings by Women in Prison*, writes:

Compelling stories are written about brutality in prisons, astronomical recidivism rates, life-long punishment for forgivable crimes, and the Atlas burden that the criminal justice system bears upon the taxpayer, but they compel us to do what? Nothing. Oh, that's so sad. Click, turn the channel. Turn the newspage [sic]. If we want change, we must do it ourselves.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Sezekly, "Art Education," 34.

¹⁴¹ Mike Anton, "Prison Artist Alfredo Santos Earns Fame, No Wealth," *Gulf News*, (May 16, 2008), accessed at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/world/other-world/prison-artist-alfredo-santos-earns-fame-no-wealth-1.105423>; Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Free Mumia," (2013), accessed March 10, 2013 at: <http://www.freemumia.com/who-is-mumia-abu-jamal/>.

¹⁴² *Tenacious* 23, (2011).

¹⁴³ Stella O'Neal, "Schools, Race, and the Middle Class Achievement Gap," *Captured Words* 8, (2009): 20-21; Anita Montoya, "Drive-Thru Death," *Captured Words* 8 (2009): 15; Michelle Moore, "End the Wall Flower Movement," 9-11.

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Jo Pender, Write a revolution" *Tenacious* 23, 2.

As evidenced by Sarah, not only is art giving prisoners opportunities to write their stories but it also contributes to the greater story of injustice that is experienced by women prisoners. As Janise Leonard says, “I hope that whoever reads my words will want to speak up and share the experiences to help heal the next person.”¹⁴⁵ Many prisoners write of how they want to change the world and how they want to help women who can relate to their experiences. They write because they “want to make a real difference in the world,” and because they “believe in the inherent goodness of people and that in any given situation if truly informed they will make the right choice, do the right thing.”¹⁴⁶ As another prisoner writes, “I hope that whoever reads my words will want to speak up and share the experiences to help heal the next person.”¹⁴⁷ Although these sentiments are noble, the realities do not often match the desires and, instead, change is limited to the individual level versus the societal level.

However, even with the limitations they face sociality, they still express gratitude to the programs for moving themselves forward. Grace says, “All of us have taken steps outward from personal crisis with movement and text. We speak through these interconnected art forms. Our artist teachers were giving us without realizing what they were offering. They understood that the effects of becoming an agent for change can be very dramatic.”¹⁴⁸ Change for these prisoners has become possible by utilizing art to communicate their desire for a change in conditions. As Shailor states:

Arts programming [...] can teach something else: individual empowerment, relational responsibility, and moral imagination. Shakespeare’s plays provide a structure, a safe vehicle for this most daring journey. The strangeness, difficulty,

¹⁴⁵ Ms. Janise Leonard, *Tenacious* 23, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ms. Janise Leonard, *Tenacious* 23, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Ms. Janise Leonard, *Tenacious* 23, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Carol A. Mullen, “Reaching Inside Out,” 151.

and excellence of the plays are precisely the stimulus and the container that are needed by men whose emotional lives are troubled, chaotic, and volcanic.¹⁴⁹

Coming from a rough and tumble environment, the ability to fully articulate thoughts and feelings is a big step forward and it is much more representative of personal growth and self-esteem than are simple test scores. Art can be a powerful experience and can provide much to the disadvantaged:

Through making art, prisoners reexamine [sic] themselves and the world around them, finding new facets and rediscovering and reinterpreting old ones. They begin to recognize what they can do and what they cannot, and they learn to set positive, realistic, and forward-looking goals, accepting both their strengths and their limitations.¹⁵⁰

Trounstine describes the benefits of arts well, saying, “I do believe that ideas can soar behind bars and books can reach inside us, as gently as a slight breeze or as fiercely as a caged bird.”¹⁵¹

Summarizing the overall impact of art programs, Gussak lists eight benefits, almost all of which are directed towards improvement in communication and expression:

1. Art is helpful in the prison environment, given the disabilities extant in this population, contributed to by organicity, a low educational level, illiteracy, and other obstacles to verbal communication and cognitive development.
2. Art allows the expression of complex material in a simpler manner.
3. Art does not require that the prisoner and/or client know, admit, or discuss what he has disclosed. The environment is dangerous, and any unintended disclosure can be threatening.
4. Art promotes disclosure, even while the prisoner and/or client is not compelled to discuss feelings and ideas that might leave him vulnerable.
5. Art has the advantage of bypassing unconscious and conscious defenses, including pervasive dishonesty.

¹⁴⁹ Shailor, “Muddy Waters,” 641.

¹⁵⁰ Sezekly, “Art Education,” 41.

¹⁵¹ Trounstine, “Texts as Teachers,” 76.

6. Art can diminish pathological symptoms without verbal interpretation.
7. Art supports creative activity in prison and provides necessary diversion and emotional escape.
8. Art permits the prisoner and/or client to express himself in a manner acceptable to the inside and outside culture.¹⁵²

Ultimately, art has many benefits, can be implemented fairly easily, and, typically attracts high levels of participation. For participants, art is not only an avenue to create something new but to create the skills needed to envision a new future. As Galindo summarizes, “I write because it frees me. It liberates me from these walls. I write to express feelings I have, that I feel are difficult to express verbally and socially.”¹⁵³ T Davis and Erin Hearn, each, respectively, in haikus, write: “My budding beauty, like an incessant vine, will entwine the world,” and “I can taste Freedom, tangy sweet morsel of hope, savoring the taste.”¹⁵⁴ Finally, April Murphy writes, “Now I know the love I need has to start with me; *I have to love myself.*”¹⁵⁵ Trounstine summarizes the experiences of prison arts programs well, stating that

the value of an arts program for female offenders is that it takes up where punishment leaves off. It enables real choice and real change and forces inmates to reckon with themselves and others. It is not sugar-coated it is not an easy way out. It makes demands, values hard work, and celebrates challenge. The value of an arts program for female offenders is that it is good for the women because it allows them to grow, but it is also good for the rest of us. With education we can enable female offenders to leave prison with more assurance that they will be better citizens.¹⁵⁶

Art, for many women, becomes the vehicle through which they may be able to change

¹⁵² David Gussak, “The Effectiveness of Art Therapy in Reducing Depression in Prison Populations,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 51, (2007) 447.

¹⁵³ Amberlyn, *Tenacious* 23, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Tanya Cerdá, “Haiku,” *Captured Words* 8, (2009): 13. T. Davis, “Haiku,” *Captured* 8, (2009): 13; Erin Ahearn, “Haiku,” *Captured Words* 8, (2009): 13.

¹⁵⁵ April Murphy, “I Have to Love Myself,” *Captured Words* 8, (2009): 22.

¹⁵⁶ Jean Trounstine, *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, 241.

their lives. Although such changee is not a guarantee, art, at least, provides opportunities to be different, to be someone new, to be free.

Tensions and Deficits

As previously mentioned, although the artistic abilities of some prisoners are astounding and truly do deserve attention, this is a fraction of the population within any prison, let alone the entire North American correctional system. Stripped of dignity, addicted to drugs, and depressed, many women have no interest in participating in artistic programs, and those that do may all ready have exceptional talents. Others, participate with lower skill levels, although impressive in their initiative to embark on such projects, these creations often do not rival some of the other pieces. Poetry that is published within prison art printings has little chance of being more published more widely and even those chosen to publish are a tenth, or less, of those who participate in writing programs.

Whether the publications and other artistic creations of these women produce social change is debatable as well. However, art programs are the social programming that prisoners, regardless of talent, can use to explore their talents, and, maybe one day, they can help others with their own talents. In this context, social change may not be, or ever be, a tidal wave on existing prison or collective issues, but the potential to influence close friends, children, and other family members becomes more possible, and with persistence, this influence can spread.

Because of the struggles to achieve personal change, let alone social change, interventions for prisoners and at-risk populations need to incorporate a wider variety of services. Education lacks the healing that art provides, art programs lack resources to

make art-based skills applicable to the outside world, and although GEDs may offer more job opportunities because of educational requirements than art programs, without help in finding jobs, most prisoners wind up alone or in situations that quickly take them back to prison within 3 years. Moreover, because many art programs do not officially line up with college-tracked programs, they receive a lot more scrutiny from government institutions, which are not convinced of the necessity of arts in prison. Regardless of the tangible results provided, a major flaw to art programs is the difficulty that they have in being recognized as a legitimate way to reduce recidivism.

Unfortunately, not all participants value the opportunities presented to them by art and traditional-educational programs. In my experience, and my advisor's 25 years of experience, some students will steal the limited supplies available for such courses. A large breach of trust, these actions indicate that even with the best of intentions by facilitators, hopes for helping some participants are dashed. Although difficult to take, prison program providers have to be hesitant in putting their faith into all students.

Although students may take advantage of course opportunities in a negative fashion, there is also the issue of restrictions these programs place on participants. While art programs typically have looser curriculums than those of traditional-education programs, the majority of classes still have a mandate, and prisoners, to a certain extent, must toe the line. Some programs do not accept submissions of violent work; others expect students to self-evaluate alongside their creations even if those evaluations do not match the interests of the student. All in all, while participants may be excited about the opportunity of attending courses, there still exists a power imbalance favoring the facilitators. Regardless of the self-expression encouraged in different programs,

ultimately, the ability to express is limited by program or facility mandates. Even in creative settings, prisoners are still prisoners; they are not as free as poems and narratives make it seem.

Considering these experiences, good and bad, alongside media images, the credibility of art programs comes into question: Why are these programs effective, and according to who. Such questions are frequent, because art programs, although creating meaningful art and other related products, ultimately, do not align with a larger, more socially accepted solution to abuse, which is the concept of punishment and “correction,” which as evidenced by ongoing deviance, is not working. Art programs that are offered via the support of a university have a greater opportunity of being recognized beyond prison walls. Programs that also focus on art, education, and job and volunteer placement, and that receive external support from local communities, produce the best results, because not only do they provide the necessary tools for success, but they also have the support of an ongoing activist academic body and rely on minimum social funding from private and public organizations. These ongoing academic and holistic programs create projects that are needed to keep prisoners out of prison and keep women and children from ever darkening a facility’s doorstep. Therefore, in my fourth chapter, I will briefly discuss the ideal qualities and tensions of holistic programs, in hopes of providing a comprehensive comparison of the offerings and successes of these types of programs versus solely traditional-education or art education-based programs.

CHAPTER IV

BECOMING WHOLE AGAIN: HEALING THROUGH HOLISTIC PROGRAMS

Combinations of art-education and traditional-education programs that seek to improve communication skills are effective in helping prisoners to exit prison. However, as previously mentioned, the applicability of these skills to other settings beyond the prison can be difficult if extensive support is not available outside of prison. Therefore, programs and services that integrate skills learned inside prisons with opportunities outside prisons have the best chance of demonstrating substantial change and possibilities for ex-prisoners. Organizations that recognize and address some of the most fundamental needs of prisoners and their families can help the previously incarcerated to set and reach goals. For prisoners who have faced generations of poverty, abuse, and many other social disadvantages, groups that work with the whole person can create significant changes for individual participants, as well as for their families and communities.

Although the United States currently has the highest incarceration rates in the world, its neighbor to the north is beginning to follow in its large footsteps. With a 9% dropout rate, Canada is filling its prisons at an astounding rate compared to other developed countries (with the exceptions of the United States and United Kingdom).¹⁵⁷ Between 2010 and 2012, Canada's incarceration rate increased by almost 7%. In addition to this startling statistic, the annual corrections budget has increased almost 44% over the past 2 years, resulting in a \$2.38 billion-dollar bill to Canadian taxpayers.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Kathryn McMullen and Jason Gilmore, "A Note on High School Graduation and School Attendance, by Age and Province, 2009/2010," *Statistics Canada* (2010), accessed March 8, 2013 at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010004/article/11360-eng.htm>.

¹⁵⁸ Howard Sapers, "Annual Report of the Officer of the Correctional Investigator 2011-2012," *The Correctional Investigator Canada*, June 26, 2012, accessed at: <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/rpt/annrpt/annrpt20112012-eng.aspx#s4>.

Currently, within my home province of Manitoba, extensive prisoner-focused programming is much more limited; therefore, I worked with an institution that provides preventive and remedial care to struggling mothers and youth, both of whom are at high risk of government intervention.¹⁵⁹ Hence, work both inside and outside of prisons is important, as it serves a wide range of societal needs. Some of those programs work in the community and focus on preventive care to divert many people from going to prison; other programs work in prison facilities to integrate prisoners back into the communities that they left behind. The more that these types of programs are interlinked the stronger the support network for individuals inside and outside of prison. By providing both types of services, prisoners stand a much higher chance of achieving the goals of these programs. Given the need for such integration, here, I describe three programs that provide comprehensive services to those currently incarcerated or are at-risk of being incarcerated. Moreover, because many populations struggle with similar issues when it comes to abuse and poverty, I made it a priority to incorporate a program that recognizes these complicated needs prior to individuals' incarceration, which helps to redirect their lives into productive and meaningful work versus doing time in the local correctional facility.

I focus on holistic services that address the multifaceted symptoms created by a complex host of issues, such as abuse, poverty, and low educational attainment. Two of the programs discuss work more extensively with those who have been, or currently are, incarcerated, which includes both youth and adults; the other organization focuses primarily on preventive and remedial care, in some instances working with youth and

¹⁵⁹ Including, but not limited to, the justice system, child and family services, addiction interventions, etc.

moms, who share many similarities with the incarcerated women and youth that are featured in this thesis. First, The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP), based in Michigan, provides many tools inside and outside of prisons, and operates in more than 40 prisons across that state. Second, Each One Reach One (EORO) works in the Bay Area of California and helps at-risk and incarcerated youth to attain a GED in prison, and, simultaneously, fosters creativity and healing through personal script writing and professional enactment of created plays. Third, I emphasize the importance of the Canadian-based program “Mrs. Lucci’s Resource Centre” (which was mentioned at the opening of this thesis). After my experiences at that center, I realize that the stories told by and about local mothers and their children at the center are riddled with many of the same issues with which incarcerated people grapple.¹⁶⁰ The women from Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba, Canada have access to some of the same opportunities that are available to prisoners, but also some additional ones, which draws attention to the importance of preventive and intervention-based care. Another reason for including Mrs. Lucci’s is that the program emphasizes many of the attributes that I will incorporate into my later project albeit with a slightly different focus.¹⁶¹ I focus, specifically, on education and art not only with female prisoners and ex-prisoners but also with their children and those mothers at-risk of being separated from their children, as Mrs. Lucci’s works both with disadvantaged children and their mothers.¹⁶² The center helps youth to transition from special programming into jobs and higher education, which is accomplished by improving their interviewing, writing, and interpersonal communication skills, all of

¹⁶⁰ As with disadvantaged, “incarcerated people” is how society typically refers to those who are in prison, and are treated differently than others in society.

¹⁶¹ See chapter five of this thesis.

¹⁶² When I speak about individuals as “disadvantaged,” I am

which are key to community members' success. Table 3 presents the main aspects and qualities of holistic programs:

Table 3. Summary of Holistic Programs Offerings and Implementation

Type of Intervention(s)	Art classes, school classes, placement classes, parenting classes, school program classes, youth programs, job-skill building class
Intervention Intentions	By combining a variety of artistic, educational, job-related, and communication-based skills, holistic programs seek to improve individuals' success, use creative methods to provide therapeutic support, and provide new skill sets inside and outside of prison
Methods	Administrate a variety of classes, art, education, and intra- and interpersonal skills, based on interests and aptitudes; encourage individuals to express and explore interests; provide support and networking in the community; provide resources to create art, find jobs, and become involved in work organizations
Outcomes	Prisoners find a new sense of self; communication skills increase in areas, such as verbal, written, performance, and creative thinking; overwhelming participant support; positive experience for university students and staff; courses and workshops shifted life courses, and created stronger ties among family, participants, and organizations;
Lateral Contributions	Provide necessary tools for individuals to survive in, and thrive outside of, prison; provide a model for other programs to replicate based on needs of community; show the power of communication in shaping the well-being of individuals and communities; participants' engagement with, and resulting successes of, the program, which provides ongoing support and evaluation
Tensions & Deficits	Limited funding and support, constant budget battles, services limited by fluctuating resources, question of how comprehensive any one program can be, failures can outweigh successes

Type of Intervention(s) Used

I categorize the services offered by these three programs into several intervention types to provide clarity in-depth information about those services. Not all of the programs

offer all of these services but examining all three organizations show that programs that are wide ranging and comprehensive do some of the best and most effective social justice work. Although I have already explained why many aspects of these programs are important, I explain benefits of the other services offered that have not been highlighted previously. I provide examples of how these programs build on similar education and artistic ideologies that were previously explored, but I also stress how these programs go above and beyond those services to provide a new level of support that is crucial, but often difficult, to emulate.

Art Shows

The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) is perhaps best known for its prisoner-based art show. Every year, the project accepts submissions, which are carefully screened, that showcase the many talents of those who are currently, or have been, incarcerated in Michigan.¹⁶³ PCAP has been in operation for more than 22 years, which means that it has helped to spread prisoners' voices for decades. PCAP offer opportunities for prisoners to empower themselves by taking charge of their experiences and finding an artistic way to understand and work through them.¹⁶⁴ On its website, PCAP displays some of the pieces that it has selected to share in its art show, which has been an annual occurrence for 18 years.¹⁶⁵ As with other artistic creations, a viewer can see a variety of styles and mediums that display emotion, as well as critique current societal conditions.

¹⁶³ Buzz Alexander. *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* (Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2010): 124.

¹⁶⁴ Alexander. *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 7, 80.

¹⁶⁵ PCAP, "Art Show," *What We Do*, accessed March 8, 2013 at: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pcap/whatwedo/artshow>.

Mrs. Lucci's also employs art as a way to work with at-risk youth and mothers, with those creations displayed at the center. Although that artwork may not garner the same attention as does PCAP's, it is still highly accessible to the community, and daughters of the artists often have their work displayed in regional art shows and competitions.¹⁶⁶ The walls of Mrs. Lucci's are often covered by the art of participants, and, given the high traffic through the building, members of that community see much of the artwork. Women beam with pride as they explain the content and intent of each piece on display—a real testament to the self-esteem building that artwork can produce.

Reading, Writing, and Publishing

All three programs use communication skill-building in many of their activities, but a special focus on reading, writing, and, ultimately, publishing is evident in many of these programs. PCAP goes into prisons and develop workshops that produce collections of prisoners' writings that then are displayed and marketed on PCAP's website.¹⁶⁷ Mrs. Lucci's helps mothers and youth to write their stories, essays, and a variety of other creative projects, which, although restricted by strict curriculum, standardized testing, and graduation expectations, staff and students enjoy pushing the boundaries with their narratives and creations. Women have also written letters of appeal to the Board of Education, asking for clemency for their programs, which face further funding cuts and

¹⁶⁶ I had several conversations with the human resource teacher at Centennial Elementary, Lac du Bonnet and she talked extensively of the artistic talents of the children of the mothers who attended Mrs. Lucci's. Several had won awards and were being placed in provincial wide art displays and competitions.

¹⁶⁷ PCAP. "Literary Review," *What We Do*, accessed March 8, 2013 at:
<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pcap/whatwedo/literaryreview>.

have the potential to be cancelled.¹⁶⁸ EORO, as explained below, does its writing through theatrical pieces, which still require expanded literary skill sets.

Reading is an important attribute to all of these projects, and for writing and publishing to occur, people must have a basic mastery of language. Using a variety of forms of writing, (e.g. poetry, essays, narratives, and academic works), a stronger vocabulary is developed and participants' skill sets are broadened. Developing individuals' prose and presentations through broad exposure to literary and creative works means that prisoners, youth, and mothers can use these newly learned skills to change their lives. EORO employs play writing; at Mrs. Lucci's, it is creative and formal writing; and PCAP's includes plays, poetry, creative writing, and creating portfolios of participants' work.

Playwriting

Much like Shailor and Trounstine, EORO and PCAP help prisoners to develop plays and scripts in which they play and embody various roles that show the complexities of their personalities. Because theater requires cooperation among participants, this type of intervention can forge bonds where previously there were none. Playwriting encourages the development of important capacities, such as self-esteem, self-expression, and communication improvement. As previously discussed, PCAP employs similar strategies to those employed by Shailor and Trounstine, but PCAP does not focus exclusively on Shakespeare, and it employs a level of flexibility in the performances' content, intent, and expectations. PCAP and EORO incorporate a variety of activities and

¹⁶⁸ Although education classes for mothers were cancelled, former participants still appear at the center regularly to drop off and pick up children from other programs. They are also actively petitioning the local education board to continue to offer the programs.

exercises that develop participants' voices through individually created characters.¹⁶⁹ EORO has incarcerated students create dialogues between animals or inanimate objects that focus on creators' experiences, hopes, fears, and dreams. Professional actors produce the dialogue, and youth are showcased for their talent, bravery, and improvements in self-expression, self-esteem, and communication.

University Courses on Home Campuses

As Trounstine noted, students want to learn what prisoners learn about and, hence, they want to do similar coursework. Much like Trounstine's experience, University of Colorado at Denver (facilitated by Adams State University) and the University of Michigan (UM) have lined up their college courses with those being offered in prison. Initially, credit is offered to UM students for writing reflections on volunteering within a prison facility or other organization; however, this experience quickly turns into a passion for social justice. Deal, in her prison-acting program, encourages this type of active reflection as well, with students expected to engage and discuss their experiences.¹⁷⁰ UM has a long history of liaisons to the Michigan Department of Corrections, and it has most recently passed on the benefits of its experience through a recent publication by the founder, Buzz Alexander, which provides documents and suggestions to help other colleges and universities create similar ties with their correctional department.¹⁷¹ PCAP has become a leader in using its relationship with

¹⁶⁹ Robin Sohnen, "Each One Reach One: Playwriting and Community Activism as Redemption and Prevention," in *Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex: Activism, Arts, and Education Alternatives*, edited by Stephen John Hartnett, (Illinois: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2011): 181; Alexander, *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 77-83

¹⁷⁰ Claire E. Deal, "Acting for Social Justice" (in progress).

¹⁷¹ Alexander. *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* (2010).

the university to enact real change for prisoners and ex-prisoners. PCAP points out that university students who receive credit in academic term typically come back in following terms, even without the enticement of credit—a real indication of the power of prison activism work and community building.

University of Colorado Denver has a strong communication department that is dedicated to promoting social justice, including a focus on prison activism. Several of the department's courses are designed to work with various agencies throughout Denver, whose focus is to reduce the reach of the prison system. Many of those agencies focus on at-risk youth and other disadvantaged populations, which helps to divert individuals from the justice system. I was a part of a course that did this type of prison activism work, which expanded my exposure to prison-oriented social justice by learning important concepts and frameworks, and, like PCAP students, others and I came back for more.

General Education Development Classes

As discussed previously, the GED, diploma, and vocational programs, all three involve working towards degree attainment, but these elements are more prevalent in EORO's and Mrs. Lucci's programming. Both of those groups work with youth who have not excelled in normal classrooms and, consequently, they employ specific strategies to help students excel. Students often need modified course loads, but the ultimate goal is to provide them with the skills and certification to excel in life.¹⁷² PCAP primarily uses workshops that focus on creative writing and develop reading, writing, and verbal skills, all of which are useful in the pursuit of an education.

¹⁷² Mrs. Lucci's Resource Centre, "Programs," accessed March 12, 2013 at: <http://www.mrsuccis.com/programs.html>; Sohnen, "Each One Reach One," 188-190.

Portfolio Projects

The portfolio project offered by PCAP helps participants to gather their work and to make it marketable as a representation of participants' aptitudes. To exemplify a broad range of skills and abilities, those people who have been previously incarcerated create a portfolio to market themselves for jobs and volunteer opportunities.¹⁷³ Resume building and other job-application materials, such as cover letters and references, also are completed to aid participants' applications for school. EORO and Mrs. Lucci's, for instance, both help students and mothers prepare resumes and other relevant documents. At Mrs. Lucci's, mothers and students create the necessary documents to work within the local community; at EORO, workshops teach participants to create a large enough body of work that they can be linked with organizations that match their interests and talents.¹⁷⁴

Linkage Project

The Linkage Project is unique to PCAP; although Mrs. Lucci's and EORO offer similar programs, they are better classified in other categories. PCAP offers a very special skill-based program that involves a mentor–mentee relationship, in which mentors help mentees to develop their work by connecting them with courses, workshops, community artists and writers, and venues for exhibition or performance.¹⁷⁵ A budget is also allocated to mentees, such that when they provide appropriate receipts related to art, and other skill-set projects, they are reimbursed up to \$300.¹⁷⁶ This ongoing relationship

¹⁷³ Alexander. *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 157-163.

¹⁷⁴ Sohnen, "Each One Reach One," 191-193.

¹⁷⁵ Alexander. *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 163.

¹⁷⁶ Alexander. *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 163.

with PCAP creates a continued support base for ex-prisoners and helps to develop their abilities once they are back in the community.

Parenting and After-School Programs

After-school programs vary by organization. One of Mrs. Lucci's primary foci is helping families to use effective parenting and communication strategies in their home and with their children. Children and families are welcomed to attend several evening activities, including open-gym night, book clubs, and other fun projects that children can work on with the support of their parents. Parents are welcomed to attend courses that include workshops on how to work with children and teenagers, and how to be a supportive role model in the home. For older students, other activities are organized, such as "hang out" nights, which are supported by staff to create a safe place for students to interact with one another. For students from troubled homes, this opportunity provides a needed release from familial stress. EORO provides the majority of its GED work after school, as many students need to maintain jobs or have carceral restrictions that limit their movements and participation.

School Supply Programs

Because Mrs. Lucci's works with a many elementary, middle school, and secondary school students, to encourage their excellence, the organization provides funds for basic school necessities, and even for activities, such as field trips. Mrs. Lucci's assists students from impoverished backgrounds by providing materials such as notebooks and crayons. I have heard stories about kindergarteners missing their first field

trip because their moms could not afford a needed hat, sunscreen, or even a lunch. By providing these supplies, parents can watch their children excel. Many of the mothers with whom I worked mentioned the artistic abilities of their daughters, whose work I was shown by teachers at the local elementary school. EORO and PCAP programs also provide supplies through their programs, helping participants to create artwork, resumes, portfolios and other projects.

Transitional Education and Outreach Programs

For many participants, to continue to be successful, they must have support systems in the community. Many educational programs must go beyond work in the classroom to link participants to other resources beyond the classroom—or concrete—walls. At Mrs. Lucci’s, this goal often means helping students to find paid or volunteer work in the community, and for mothers, it means working in the local in-store thrift shop or at other jobs that work around their restricted schedules. EORO provides students with training in a variety of creative roles that enable them to move into postsecondary education, digital video, culinary school, electronics, nursing, medical billing, web design, and other avenues reflecting students’ interests.¹⁷⁷ EORO prides itself on providing participants with many job learning and training opportunities that move beyond EORO’s service scope.

¹⁷⁷ Sohnen, “Each One Reach One,” 192.

Healthy Choice Programs

Especially in the programs oriented toward youth and mothers, there are resources that are designed specifically to encourage healthy choices and relationships. Mrs. Lucci's provides a variety of parenting classes, brown bag lesson classes, new-mom resources, and classes that focus on nutrition, parenting, and community support. EORO has two programs that help youth to make good choices in intimate relationships, set healthy boundaries, and develop positive self-image. The importance of these classes cannot not be stressed enough, as they help family members to develop stronger relationships and they help youth to make choices that will propel them further rather than hinder them.¹⁷⁸

Intervention Intentions

All three of these organizations want to see the people with whom they work succeed and live healthy, productive lives; to do so, they focus on promoting participants' creativity and self-esteem to help them embark on the type of life that they want. By emphasizing these positive trajectories, these programs hope to help youth and adults navigate positive life courses versus the ones to which they have been relegated to by larger society. To encourage this process of self-improvement, these organizations focus on improving people's self-esteem, self-expression, and their communication skills to the, all of which are self-reinforcing. EORO and PCAP, which primarily work with those who are incarcerated, work especially hard to provide opportunities to prevent ongoing incarceration. By helping individuals to tell their stories and to create tangible work from

¹⁷⁸ Each One Reach One, (2012), accessed March 12, 2013 at: <http://www.eoro.org/our-mission/healthy-choices>; <http://www.eoro.org/our-mission/kis-keeping-it-safe>.

their efforts, these organizations intend to give individuals needed opportunities to develop their self-esteem, to such a point, that they pursue avenues different from those that brought them to prison. To accomplish this goal, they use a variety of methods, as, explained below.

Mrs. Lucci's, knowing that the students and mothers who seek services are often facing a ticking clock that is quickly pushing them toward endless poverty, increased deviancy, and crushing loneliness, and staff work tirelessly in hopes of intervening with these struggling community members. Women who do not have their grade 12 are quickly regulated to social assistance, and they tend to see themselves as despondent and dependent on either a man or on the government. Children from those homes struggle in school for acceptance, with poverty creating a large divide between them and their peers. As a result, deviancy occurs in a variety of ways, because of poverty, anger, and desperation. Many of the youth at Mrs. Lucci's will emulate their parents if they do not graduate from high school and develop skills to succeed. Therefore, Mrs. Lucci's provides education about many of these skills as possible, such as how to take care of day-to-day things, (e.g. grocery shopping and meal preparation, but also artistic and education needs), all of which are intended to move participants in a different direction from a life that none of them find to be rewarding: one without individuality, freedom, or options—also known as prison.

Specific Work Expectations

Although these organizations have similar work expectations, they differ in some areas. For PCAP, prison workshops demand commitment, participation, and cooperation,

with a finished piece, be it written, visual, or performance based. PCAP also has specific requirements for portfolios, such as projects using various artistic forms, resumes, and cover letters, all of which help participants to secure work after leaving the program. PCAP also requires participants to be a part of the creative process. PCAP emphasizes collaboration over teaching, and it expects university students to show the utmost dedication to the project at hand, which results in the setting of high expectations for both prisoner and college participants.

Mrs. Lucci's, because of its close government regulation, has many of the same work expectations as do typical schools. To attain diplomas and GEDs, students must complete the appropriate math, science, and English courses, as well as pass standardized and grade-administrated tests. In talking with center workers, they admit that they are often slaves to requirements that do not reflect the needs and goals of their students. However, as much of North America acknowledges, without a diploma or GED, it is almost impossible to be employed these days. Mothers, who are often more able and eager to complete standardized coursework, need less coaxing than students do to complete assigned tasks, and they take pleasure in completing them, as they tend to better understand the massive benefits of educational opportunities.

EORO has similar expectations, as do Mrs. Lucci's and PCAP. Students must complete their work as assigned, engage in workshops and classes, and are challenged to master new skills. Students are expected to attend workshops, educational classes, and meetings with their mentors. Students, who are actively incarcerated, must develop a script, in a 2-week workshop, that summarizes aspects of their life through the voices of nonhuman characters. EORO expects students to take an active look at their lives and to

translate their new view into art, much like PCAP does with its written and visual requirements.

Methods

How programs are administrated depends on the type of courses offered. Visual art is best represented by PCAP and by the art courses offered at Mrs. Lucci's. PCAP and Mrs. Lucci's also share the aim of teaching participants how to create resumes and portfolios, and EORO helps participants to develop the skills to fill their portfolios. Mrs. Lucci's helps students and mothers to find placements by developing their marketable skills. For PCAP, previous participants can become artistic mentors for those new to the program, and this involvement serves as motivation and role modeling for new and returning participants.

All three programs have participants engage in extensive writing. PCAP uses creative ways to encourage written activities, poems, stories, narratives, and other types of writing that then are reflected in the student-made portfolios. EORO and Mrs. Lucci's also use creative elements, such as playwriting, poetry, and stories, but they also have the direct element of education that is offered in their alternative educational programs. Students and mothers must be able to write at grade level and to master language that, typically, was denied to them via traditional education.

As a result, those programs provide similar skills, but they also differ in some important ways. Education is a priority at Mrs. Lucci's and at EORO, as they deal with many youth and mothers who have low educational attainment; PCAP, in contrast, uses artistic means to help those who are incarcerated to achieve new skill sets, as other

programs cover the GED and high school aspects of education in Michigan, which, again, shows the avenues that participants can pursue in different parts of North America.¹⁷⁹

Outcomes

Program designers noted an extremely warm welcome to their programs and initiatives within populations affected by prisons. By helping groups that traditionally receive little support, any activity or suggestion by these organizations is often quickly embraced by participants. Students in EORO's programs often rave about the support from the program through videos and broadcasts, in direct testimony to those who created the program. PCAP has created programs in which participants claim how PCAP has changed their lives and has made them realize their skills and abilities beyond those of a prisoner.¹⁸⁰ Mrs. Lucci's mothers and youth talk of their enjoyment of the program. The youth, often sassy, are still obviously thrilled to be there as they laugh with one another and with the staff. Youth who were at danger of not graduating, ever, are now being propelled forward to achieve new and exciting things, much like those at EORO and PCAP.

Communication evolves in many ways through these programs, and it often is reflected in participants' artistic creations. Many of the wishes and dreams of participants are evident in their creations and range from cultural representations to the finer things of life, things that others typically take for granted. The importance of this type of

¹⁷⁹ Michigan Department of Corrections, "Prisoner Education," accessed March 8, 2013 at: http://www.michigan.gov/corrections/0,4551,7-119-9741_9747---,00.html.

¹⁸⁰ Play Gallery, "Acts of Art: The Prison Creative Arts Project (TRAILER)," www.YouTube.com, January 24, 2008, accessed at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQh5HxR8ACY>; CreativeImpactMi, ""PCAP: Prison Creative Arts Project" (Creative Impact Michigan 09.22.11)," www.YouTube.org, September 21, 2011, accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do0zjBqkhXE>.

exploration is that it shows the softer side of prisoners and those who are disadvantaged, and it builds ways to connect with the local communities in ways that previously were unavailable. Reaching out to others through heritage, such as Aboriginal art, creates commonalities among prisoners, and, as done in art programs, this work is a great foundation for self-exploration and community building. By engaging in art with one another and with members of their communities, prisoners increase their self-esteem and create a vision for themselves beyond what they currently know. Figures 2 and 3, for instance, are a powerful testament to the talent that lies locked away behind prison walls.

Figures 2. and 3. “Stunning” and “Photogenic”



In PCAP’s online gallery, two stunning pieces showcasing the wide range of interests and talents of Michigan’s prisoners.¹⁸¹

As can be seen in these figures, participants’ artwork uses many colors, paint vivid portraits of nature, and are laden with symbolic meaning to be interpreted by the painter

¹⁸¹ Karen Bunnell Boes, “Stunning,” and Lawrence Clor, “Photogenic,” *Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners*, (2007-2010), accessed March 10, 2013 at:

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pcap/gallery/visualart/annualexhibitionofartbymichiganprisoners>

and viewers alike. Encouraging the exploration of self and society through art, these programs intervene in the lives of those who come from extensive disadvantage. These programs contain within them the potential to create social change—even on a limited, as other program administrators have noted within their work.¹⁸² Although these pieces may not, and are not, representative of the skill levels of prisoners, in general, the potential for any artistic endeavor to create personal change is possible, which leaves doors open for greater change.

The mothers who participated in programming at Mrs. Lucci's shared similar pride in their displayed work. Almost all of them commented that they did not know they had such skills, they were eager to reengage type of work should funding become possible. Much of the work demonstrated a variety of aptitudes; some mothers are extremely detailed oriented, whereas others explore their cultural heritage through art, and still others enjoy the task of attempting to perfect their work, regardless of theme. Much like those whose work is displayed in PCAP's annual art exhibition, art created at Mrs. Lucci's also deserves recognition and Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7 show the many interests and aptitudes of the participating mothers and several are shown below:

¹⁸² Valentine, "If the Guards Only Knew," 242.

Figures 4 and 5. Both untitled, but both are created by one of the mothers at Mrs. Lucci's.



Desiree, the artist, commented that she felt most comfortable painting in traditional Aboriginal style and joked that it was the only way she knew how to do art.

Figure 6. Untitled, but also created by one of the mothers at Mrs. Lucci's.



Heidi, one of the participating mothers, painted this picture, of which I commented, that it was beautiful and perfect. She was quick to show me where she would fix things if she had the time/resources to do it. What I thought was a wonderful piece of finished art; to her it was just the beginning.

Figure 7. Untitled, created by another one of the moms at Mrs. Lucci's.



Kathy spent hours making her painting so detailed that her daughter had to stop her and tell her that it was beautiful as is.

All of the women whose work was showcased beamed with pride when I asked them about their images, and I knew that something deep and meaningful was occurring. These women were using the limited resources that were available to them to express themselves, to build their self-esteem, and to change their lives, if only in small ways. All of the stories that they shared from their lives led them to this work, and with Mrs. Lucci's support, these women showed the many aspects of their lives; stories that often shared similar themes and successes and failures that are known all too well by other disadvantaged mothers and prisoners. Although not all community members share a similar flair for creative arts, there seemed to be strong artistic abilities within the community, and a wide range of abilities, within the center.

Many prisoners are acutely aware of many of the social circumstances that affect their involvement in the justice system. Many prisoners have followed the "school-to-

prison pipeline” that has been recognized in critical social justice education in the last several decades.¹⁸³ Therefore, their visual art often reflects these societal conditions and it critiques many of the injustices within the corrections system, such as the death penalty and the fate of American’s children. Many prisoners do not have many opportunities to politicize their causes; consequently, when given the opportunity to publish and display their work, it is exciting. It only takes one person to make a difference, and by adding their voice to the voices of other prisoners and anti-prison advocates, these prisoners are building a running commentary of the injustices of the prison system, even if they do not change the world, at least they have contributed to the greater anti-prison dialogue. Commentary of prisoners about the effects of prison are powerful and display much of the hidden talents of those who are incarcerated. Figures 8 and 9 show some salient images of the impacts of incarceration on the United States:

Figures 8 and 9. “U.S. Most Wanted” and “Don’t Mess with Texas”



More stunning work from PCAP’s gallery, the imagery is strong and shows the critical perspectives of those most impacted by the ongoing consequences of ongoing incarceration.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Braz and Williams, “Diagnosing the Schools-to-Prison Pipeline.”

¹⁸⁴ Rafael de Jesus, “U.S. Most Wanted,” and Andres Gonzalez, “Don’t Mess With Texas,” *Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners*, (2007-2010), accessed March 10, 2013 at: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/pcap/gallery/visualart/annualexhibitionofartbymichiganprisoners>

Those who society deems as unfit are actually quite able to describe in detail injustices and disadvantages that brought them into Department of Corrections in the first place. Art, thus, become, a window into the dark basement of society that is the prison system.

As mentioned, plays also demonstrate unique outcomes in their stories and critiques of society. At EORO, plays focus around characters that, although representative, are not the writers themselves. Interesting revelations come to light in these plays, and many of the writers share deep and meaningful stories that would be difficult to share via their words. These themes range from topics that reflect great complexities and emotions to those who are simply frustrated. Many of the stories have happy endings, but many are unresolved; some even involve the main character sacrificing herself for the rest of her family. Each story shows such brutal honesty, and the youth writers show an astounding the resiliency. A dialogue between “Viper the Snake” and “Marisella” the moss, two fictional non-human characters created by an EORO participant, tells a sad tale of abuse:

Viper the Snake: I feel horrible for doing this, but I feel that it's necessary because I don't want to lose you, my only friend. Oh, and I forgot to tell you, when I tried eating the bottom of your moss, the taste made me energized, it made me feel better—it was a medicine for me. And now that I've stopped eating you, I feel sad again. [...] Please, Marisella, will you die for me, your best friend, so I can accomplish my dream?

Marisella the Moss [to herself]: Gosh. This is a big decision. What am I going to do? I love Viper and the whole forest. They are my life. But are they important enough to sacrifice my own life? Maybe this is a sign. That it's time for me to go. Wow, I'm going to miss Viper, the birds, the owls, my family, brothers, sisters, Mom, Dad. But I'm dying for them, so in a way, I'm happy, because I'm saving my family's life, and Viper and I will be getting what we always wanted. Me, the forest to live forever, and Viper getting healthy again.

This dialogue offers a glimpse into the experience of the young, female writer, who, for a variety of reasons, has wound up incarcerated at a juvenile facility. Represented as Marisella, she sacrifices her life for a ‘friend’ who would rather destroy her than ‘lose her.’¹⁸⁵

Other narratives reveal different sides of participants who wish their parents would say other things to them that they do not hear. A young girl fantasizes about a relationship with her mom and wishes her mother would be there for her:

Perfect, the Sun: Mija! I understand that you’re going through a lot. You have to communicate on how you feel. I didn’t know that you in so much pain and hurt and so angry. It’s my job to protect you. I will listen to you and pay more attention to you and support you in everything that you do. I just want you to be happy and don’t have to feel you need to hang around those raggedy boy trees. I love you and I’ll always love you. Don’t ever forget that! We got work to do and this is the beginning of it because nothing’s more important than peace, love, and family and understanding.

Such narratives show families making up, but others are sad stories that include mothers who leave because of problems with drugs, and families pushing away children because of sexual orientation, or because of the people with whom the children associate.¹⁸⁶ However, in each story, the youth is strong and irrepressible. Even when the story does not end in a happy-ever-after fashion, the main character remains strong, and the applause from the audience, ultimately, is for the author’s strength and spirit.

PCAP’s participants are no strangers to strength in spirit; a prisoner even stated that “I can say without reservation, that the U of M art exhibit for prisoners has *restored*

¹⁸⁵ Madeline R., “A One Act Play,” *Each one Reach One: Transforming Kids Behind Bars*, (2002), accessed March 8, 2013 at: <http://www.eoro.org/eoro-youth/youth-plays/youth-service-center/a-one-act-play-2002>.

¹⁸⁶ Tiana J. “Unforgiven Truth,” *Each one Reach One: Transforming Kids Behind Bars*, (2009), accessed March 8, 2013 at: <http://www.eoro.org/eoro-youth/youth-plays/youth-service-center/unforgiven-truth-2009>; Claudia V., “A Mothers Broken Heart, A Daughter’s Greatest Wish,” *Each One Reach One: Transforming Kids Behind Bars*, (2002), accessed March 8, 2013 at: <http://www.eoro.org/eoro-youth/youth-plays/thornton/a-mothers-broken-heart-a-daughters-greatest-wish-2002>.

my human spirit" [author emphasis], and other prisoners state similar things. A prisoner said:

Perhaps the best service anyone could give a man in prison is to let him know it is okay to think. It is sure most of the artists in prison will never have the chance to show anyone what they can do. They are not encouraged to think. It is discouraged more than anyone can understand. Your exhibition encourages us to think. I thank you for that.¹⁸⁷

This statement is likely one of many that PCAP has received in the decades since its foundation. Another prisoner commented that he now has a talent that he can use to support himself and to "give people pleasure, at the same time," with art, for this ex-prisoner, means a new way to interact and to build relationships with others; a testament to the increased self-esteem that this participant gained through PCAP's workshops.¹⁸⁸

Not only do prisoners develop confidence but university students do as well, which is extremely important if this work is to continue in the coming decades. Buzz notes that students, who, typically, are middle-class, white females, come in nervous and unsure about the experience ahead of them, and if they are not careful, this uncertainty will translate into uncertain participation in the workshops, negatively affecting them and other participants.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, students must go into the workshops willing to share, learn, and be a part of lives that have often had little to no stability.

As I have demonstrated, the outcomes of these workshops are often complicated and hard to calculate, but they are sometimes breathtaking in their impact. The projects created by participants' are filled with pride for their achievements. All three organizations note the sense of pride that people have in their work; ultimately, producing

¹⁸⁷ Alexander, *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 173.

¹⁸⁸ Alexander, *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 173.

¹⁸⁹ Buzz Alexander, "A Piece of the Reply": The Prison Creative Arts Project and Practicing," in *Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex: Activism, Arts, and Education Alternatives*, (Illinois: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2011): 155.

a large increase in their self-esteem. Through artwork, prisoners are better able to change themselves and those around them. However, these art programs need to be reinforced with other community support, at which Mrs. Lucci's and EORO excel with incarcerated and at-risk youth, as well as with disadvantaged mothers. PCAP, given its ability to network in the community and to foster ongoing participants' creativity, is monumental in producing lasting change, because prisoners have a continuing liaison with a support network. Although Mrs. Lucci's, in comparison, offers more programs that are oriented at younger people, and to mothers and parents, these are still of utmost importance because strong individuals need strong families to support them.

Diverse, yet interlinked programming stands a larger chance at producing meaningful change compared to programs that have limited foci. Whereas education and art provide key work- and expression-related skills, more comprehensive programs focus those achievements on community and family building as well. This interconnecting of outcomes helps to transition youth and adults from troubled to talented and confident, which is evident from the outcomes of the artistic and educational endeavors of participants, as verified in my experience with the women at Mrs. Lucci's. Hungry to learn and to inspire others, these women are proud of what they have done—and what they can do—and have amazing things to say about the center and the services that it offers, even saying that their education inspires their children to do better in school. Positive reinforcement and help, which mothers could not previously offer, build stronger family bonds, foster independence, mediate abuse, poverty, and self-esteem issues.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Upon cancelling the mother's education program, several women commented that their children were not achieving at the same level with decreased role modeling and ongoing limited ability, showing the importance of supporting children in their scholastic work.

Lateral Contributions

The best thing about these programs is they offer templates for further program development. These three successful models, in a variety of ways, offer ideas that can, and should, be replicated in other projects. The methods employed, services offered, and intervention intentions are admirable. These programs show that the benefits of multifaceted programs can be numerous and should be emulated. Their pre-, current, and post-work provide excellent ways to create programs that can impact diverse populations, especially if a program incorporated the best of each of these programs. PCAP shows that creative art increase participants' self-esteem, as prisoners and community members, who did not initially see their self-worth, do so through the artistic methods offered by PCAP. Mothers at Mrs. Lucci's, who thought that they had no talents other than being stay-at-home moms, see that their artwork is amazing and worthy of awe. EORO shows through the strong words of their participants that its model works. EORO has produced video recordings that showcase the change in their participants, who comment on the successes that the program has brought into their lives.¹⁹¹ EORO's involvement of professional actors also shows youth that their work is taken seriously and that it deserves to be performed by experts. Similar sentiments occur in PCAP's art show, in that participants are honored to have their work displayed and potentially purchased by individuals outside the prison walls.¹⁹² Although Mrs. Lucci's currently does not have the resources to film videos of its successes, staff at the center verbally confirm how this multifaceted program better helps community members in comparison to programs that limit participants to single-streamed tasks, to which the women and youth at this center provide testimony.

¹⁹¹ See: Each One Reach One, "Videos," accessed March 8, 2013 at: <http://www.eoro.org/news-and-resources/videos>.

¹⁹² Alexander, "A Piece of the Reply," 171.

Mrs. Lucci's is unique in that it works closely with parents and children. Although offering communication skill building for individuals, it also emphasizes improving famy communication, which explains why it offers so many programs and workshops that involve both parents and youth. These workshops encourage participants to role-model important values and behaviors in their homes, and they encourage a love for art, education, and recreational activity. Mrs. Lucci's emphasizes the importance of family relationships and, therefore, encourages participants' parents (currently not in any programs) to come and observe the work of their children, and to offer support for their children's achievements. In this way, Mrs. Lucci's does its best to change the social circumstances of those it works with by holistically treating the family.

These programs not only enable current participants to empower themselves but those participants also make themselves available to those who wish to continue to engage the program. As mentioned, Mrs. Lucci's not only helps youth but also mothers; consequently, there are generations of support for community members. PCAP brings back previous participants as volunteers, and encourages its university students to be ongoing members of PCAP, which many of them do. EORO has students who come back to speak to other youth and to encourage other participants to succeed. Although these changes within each of these programs may seem small in scale, the trickle-down effect is important. As made clear, these programs, like all social welfare programs, are limited in their resources and often face funding difficulties, but these complications do not stop the work of these organizations, nor do they limit participants to a statistic that is glossed over in analyses for further funding. These programs, instead, respect individuals.

Prisoners, at-risk youth, and disadvantaged mothers all need a chance to vocalize their needs, feelings, and ask for opportunities, so they can be heard alongside others.

Tensions and Deficits

Although these multi-faceted programs address a wider variety of needs than do other programs designed for at-risk youth and those who are incarcerated, they are not without their drawbacks. Because these programs are often more extensive than other types of programs, they require more funding and volunteer networks to provide the services offered. When funds run low, programs are slashed. Unfortunately, at Mrs. Lucci's, funding was slashed to such an extent that programs were cancelled, and the first to go were the the programs designed for mothers, because they were told to attend another facility that offered only night classes, which the women cannot attend because of needing to care for their small children. Although Mrs. Lucci's is pressing for more funding, to this point in time, the Board of Education has refused to open the classes for mothers.

Staff members at Mrs. Lucci's are torn about this educational dilemma. Often stretched too thin already, programs leaders decide that to pursue extensive advocacy would limit their ability to work with and network for the youth at the center, which would set the youth up for similar experiences as their mothers and older friends. A vicious cycle is created when holistic methods cannot be applied to both groups. Mrs. Lucci's has to choose its priorities—even if it is not its choice. PCAP and EORO also face similar dilemmas in that funding is always appreciated but seldom is enough. PCAP has seen some of its programs suffer, particularly its linkage program, which was

designed to network and mentor ex-prisoners, because there has not been sufficient time or attention to give it a strong focus.¹⁹³ Many participants in all of the programs wind up reincarcerated, in rehabilitation, or gone because of ongoing difficulties with drug addiction, something that PCAP, along with the other programs, cannot directly help. Although certain pro-health workshops and courses are offered, they do not provide drug addiction help, which, arguably, is one of the biggest problems with which prisoners and those at-risk of it, struggle.

As with the other programs, the ability to follow up with many of these participants is difficult, although some do stay in contact with the organizations. Staff members at Mrs. Lucci's speak with pride when former participants stop by to visit, many of them with jobs or now in college, achievements not likely accomplished without Mrs. Lucci's. However, the staff at Mrs. Lucci's cautioned me that this outcome is not always the case, and frequently is not. Because it is a relatively small community, staff members often hear things about former participants that are not always good. Some of those participants find their way back to the center after run-ins with the law, or after they have become a young parent themselves, neither of which are ideal situations. EORO and PCAP, both being located in dense urban areas, do not have the benefit of the small community trickling information back to them; hence, when participants disappear, it is very difficult to find them again. When students are released, they are provided with courses to help them develop personal and professional goals, but because of a variety of social and familial situations, this is not always possible.

¹⁹³ Alexander, *Is William Martinez Not Our Brother?* 170-172.

As with the art, and even traditional-education programs, facilitators and program requirements put limits on the expression of participants. Limitations on participation are always a barrier, students can perform plays, but they are usually chosen by the facilitator, violent or negative art pieces will not typically get shown in art shows, and inappropriate writing pieces will not get published in magazines and handouts. Therefore, facilitator and program creators are still very much in a position of power with participants because of the limitations and expectations of the administrators. However, at the same time, one of the best ways to work against this position of power is to be open, willing to participate and share, and most importantly, keep showing up. While there will always be rules and regulations, dedication and loyalty can override some of the barriers between prisoners and programmers.

Finally, the biggest tension of this program mirrors much of the others: they often cannot change the social situation to which participants are returning. Although these programs avidly work with youth, mothers, and prisoners, they cannot change the neighborhood, family, and relationships to which they return. Although the pursuit of social change by activists and prisoners alike is admirable, even empowered ex-prisoners face difficulties that challenge their skills and often block the path to personal, let alone societal, change. Staff can try to enable participants to have better options, but for those straight out of prison, a halfway house does not provide the space needed to, for instance, study effectively. When returning to care for children, time is eaten away from homework time. When a family has been barely getting by, employment is necessary, which also takes away from the ability to complete coursework. Mrs. Lucci's addresses this issue more extensively than do the other organizations, but that it is made possible

because of the small community size and interconnectedness of participants. Both EORO in California and PCAP in Michigan face much larger, diverse populations that span the entire state, versus the small town of just over 1,000 in Canada. However, even in such a small town, Mrs. Lucci's staff members face all of the obstacles confronted by the other two programs; their scope is limited, their reach can only extend so far, and support from outside institutions, much like art and educational programming for offenders, is at a lot of the time, minimal at best. In a society that seeks to normalize everyone, those who do not conform wind up on the outskirts of society, often desperate for services that continue to be chewed away at year after year.

In all, what these programs bring to the table outweighs their drawbacks. The combination of traditional and art education along with support, clearly, is a design for success. Perhaps one of the best things that can come from these programs is their emulation in other communities that desire to support and facilitate the transition of their family members back home and to keep others from ever leaving. Programs that intertwine the best, and most effective, interventions can save lives and families, and they create meaningful societal change; therefore, my greatest desire is to put this type of work in action, by either joining such an organization, or, ideally, starting one someday. To finish this thesis, in the last chapter, I describe my future and current dreams for my prison programming involvement. Finally, I attach a syllabus and proposal designed to petition for an arts and education class at DWCF as a precursor to the implementation of my designed class.

CHAPTER V

PLANNING A PROGRAM: THE FUTURE IS HIGH

A traditional thesis is an intellectual exercise, but this thesis inspires to be more. Although, in a sense, it is not conventional, this thesis will end in the application of social justice communication within my community. Although having summarized the assets and deficiencies of existing prison programs, the very purpose of applied communication is to put these theoretical visions and findings into action. Now knowing the best qualities of these programs, I, as an academic-activist, am called to action. By developing a program within my geographical area, I hope to one day contribute to the anti-prison community by assisting prisoners within Denver Women's Correctional Facility—putting my academia and education action developing a more just vision for the future.

Providing educational, artistic, and support services, often denied to prisoners before they go to prison, is necessary. Much like these holistic programs, the more comprehensive services are, the better and the more powerful the results. Whether that impact equates to statistical measurements, through administrative support, ongoing participation, improved familial relationships, an increased interest in education, or new attitudes on life, these programs can significantly affect program participants.

Currently, at the University of Colorado Denver, I and the other volunteers at UCD do not have resources to implement such a program at that scale, although it is in my imagination, hopes, and goals. In this final chapter, I describe my ideal project, including where I am currently, what I have, what I know, and what I intend to do. Although volunteers are small in number, limited in resources, and crunched for time, none of those constraints dulls the sharp knife of incarceration that slices through so

many communities, separating loved ones and ravaging families. For that reason, to paraphrase Dayle Garfield, an author in *Captured Words Free Thoughts* and contributor to “One Voice,” “we are soldiers, and we’ll never stop,” because this is a fight far from won, and one that is worth winning.¹⁹⁴

One Day

In the future, in an ideal organization, we would incorporate a wide range of workshops and programs that help the entire family of people of those who are, or at-risk of being, incarcerated. Incorporating EORO’s playwriting would create a wonderful, warm experience for tutors, facilitators, prisoners, and families alike. Writing would be an excellent attribute as well, and work such as PCAP’s reflects my greatest interests and skills, and I am eager to foster creative and academic success on a variety of levels, including writing, and playwriting. Currently, my aptitude in visual art is limited at best, but that is yet another skill that can be improved.

Much like Mrs. Lucci’s and EORO, an important aspect of the programming that I would offer would include teaching styles that are appropriate for the group in question. The educational system, in general, fails students from poor neighborhoods, and it does not even propel average-achieving students in the community. Unfortunately, unless someone is going to be an engineer, pre-calculus math is not particularly useful for future employment; instead, statistics are the most utilized and, therefore, most useful math to students, and they are worth focusing on instead of less applicable math.¹⁹⁵ Therefore,

¹⁹⁴ Dayle Garfield, “One Voice,” *Captured Words Free Thoughts* 10, (2012).

¹⁹⁵ Arthur Benjamin, “Teach Statistics Before Calculus!” *Ted: Ideas Worth Spreading*, (February, 2009), accessed at: http://www.ted.com/talks/arthur_benjamin_s_formula_for_changing_math_education.html

courses would teach statistics to help the career trajectories and interest of participants. Additionally, programs that provide school supplies are crucial for both educational and artistic endeavors. Providing resources to community members to propel themselves forward is a great idea, and, like PCAP, there could be a reimbursement strategy, such that participants could invest in materials for their future and receive a portion of that money back. However, reimbursement to impoverished women and youth may be difficult because of limited mobility and child care available, and, instead, staff and volunteers may have to accompany them to help with purchases, much like Mrs. Lucci's does.

The organization also would offer other services, such as family development workshops and youth hangouts that could double as art and creative writing workshops, as well as offer network resources for incarcerated youths' reentry into school and the local communities. Hopefully, a network of connections, eventually, would extend to incorporate a variety of agencies that are interested in supporting community members as they find their way back into an often complicated and changed society. Portfolio projects would also be an excellent endeavor to pursue, given that many mothers, youth, and prisoners have little way to advocate for themselves with regard to work and school acceptance outside these limited facilities. Should a volunteer base develop, ideally, volunteers would help with writing resumes and cover letters, and those volunteers could serve as references, with other volunteers working to increase participants' artistic attributes. Those volunteers will enjoy their experience and provide their skill sets to program participants with passion. However, volunteers and participants also will be pushed to new levels within that organization, by expanding their skill sets, extending

their volunteer experience, and becoming active community participants, to make sure that community members and facilitators alike grow.

Finally, much like UCD, PCAP, EORO, and Mrs. Lucci's, to an extent, participants' work will be displayed. With such a diverse population being helped, perhaps it would be best to categorize their work by group, but categorizing it thematically also can work. Regardless, whether it is an art show or a magazine, anything I could possibly find the funding and support to do will be pursued. Moreover, although such organizations face the ongoing uncertainty of not having enough volunteers, money, and time, these organizations have shown that it is still possible to offer multifaceted, effective program. Of course, there are limitations, but the only real limitation is whether the staff at the organization is willing to keep going. All three organizations have, at times, faced uncertainty and stress, and they have experienced, at times, more failures than successes, when lives are lost and worlds remain unchanged, but as academics and as activists, we must struggle on, because we have resources to which so few have access, and it is our job to share them with those we love and care about, as well as with those we do not know that we love and care about—yet.

Now

Currently, I have designed and petitioned the Colorado Department of Corrections within Colorado to implement an ongoing creative art and education program, one that deals especially with communication issues and strategies. Because UCD is known within Denver Women's Correctional Facility, the best approach is to emulate programs that have been offered before and to focus on public speaking and creative and academic

writing, with a splash of theater and interactive activities to encourage brainstorming, cooperation, and engagement of the material to be learned.

Unfortunately, the courses, facilitated through Adams State College, were cancelled when federal funding ended in 2012. At this point, the school is running on a strictly volunteer basis, with limited funds to create any multifaceted programs; however, these limitations do not stop me from developing the best program that I can offer to the women with whom I work. Although I do not have the federal funding to make this an official college course, that does not decrease my dedication to implementing a program that not only offers the benefits of art but also provides a foundation in literature and a variety of writing skills that can aid prisoners beyond prison walls. I have the utmost faith that the women we work with can be pushed to do great things, and I refuse to plan for anything less.

I have developed a proposal and a syllabus for a 2-month program (see Appendix A). By using a variety of famous speeches and important literary works, the course covers important themes and offers inspiration to the women I work with, to find the creativity and skills that they possess and can possess. I will serve as a facilitator and not a teacher. Much like PCAP, I have no interest in placing myself in a position of superiority, because I have just as much to learn as to offer via teaching. What I offer stylistically and grammatically are quickly trumped by what I learn about perseverance, strength, and hope against all odds, and even though a power difference will always be an underlying issue with any of these programs, being aware of these differences and attempting to minimize them through participation and support can make a large difference. What I know is microscopic to what I do not know about the struggles of the

women with whom I work. Each woman is an individual, and although she may have faced many of the injustices that have confronted her fellow prisoners, and that of disadvantaged mothers, that makes her story no less unique and no less worth hearing, which I am reminded of every time that I read one of their written pieces.

My program will be small, but big hearts will fuel it. I expect the utmost dedication of all participants, because when classes cannot commit to their projects, they, surely, will fail, which is the case not only in for plays but for all other topics as well. Hence, I will work hard to foster the communication skills needed for these women to effectively express themselves, increase their self-esteem and change the world, even if only at the smallest of levels. Regardless of what happens, energy, passion, and dedication will be the bonds that will intertwine this program through the barbed wired into the very fabric of the Denver Women's Correctional Facility.

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APPENDIX

Prison Class Proposal for the Denver Women's Correctional Facility

Denver Women's Correctional Facility
3600 Havana St.
Denver, CO

Dear Dona K. Zavislan,

We hope that this letter finds you and all those who work in your facility safe and in good health. We are writing regarding the DWCF's offering educational classes for offenders. Last Spring, Dr. Hartnett of CU Denver, together with CU students, taught classes in your facility, with Adams State College providing writing and literature classes. Unfortunately, the funding for these classes was cut, so they can no longer be provided in that same format. However, our commitment to incarcerated women has not lessened, and we have a strong desire to continue to offer programs in your facility, on a volunteer basis, albeit with a new format.

The new class we propose to offer will merge creative writing with public speaking. This class is offered in full knowledge that education while incarcerated leads to reduced recidivism and greater coping skills while incarcerated.ⁱ Our class would be budget neutral for DWCF because it would function on a 100% volunteer basis. Our volunteers will complete whatever safety training you require and we will supplement that training by running our own weekly meetings that reinforce our respect of facility rules and safety obligations. We propose that our class could run for two hours on Thursday evenings, starting, at your approval, March 21st.

After much research and planning, we are modeling our program on existing programs such as The Prison Creative Arts Project in Michigan, The Shakespeare Project in Kansas, Each One Reach One from California, and several others. Numerous studies have indicated that education programs reduce recidivism and help inmates integrate more easily into the community. These programs provide basic educational requirements for job attainment, and provide self-esteem, encourage self-improvement and healing, and help develop positive relationships on the individual and community level.ⁱⁱ As a result of these studies, we have developed a volunteer-based program that will focus on a combination of educational and creative elements to encourage personal and educational attainment.

Enclosed you will find the following items:

- Program Values and Goals
- Mission Statement
- Class Syllabus

We hope that our offering meets your standards and that we can proceed as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Hartnett	Nicole Palidwor	Misty Saribal
Professor	Graduate Student	Undergraduate Student

Department of Communication – University of Colorado at Denver
Campus Box 176
P.O. Box 173364
Denver, CO 80217-3364

PROGRAM VALUES AND GOALS

1. Develop a life-long passion for learning;
2. Develop literacy skills including reading, writing, and oral communication;
3. Develop decision making, problem solving, and creative thinking skills;
4. Develop empathy, compassion, and trust;
5. Nurture a desire to help others;
6. Increase self-esteem and develop a positive self-image;
7. Via auto-biographical writing and presenting, we hope to help participants to take responsibility for their crimes;
8. Become a responsible member of a group (class), as well as reintegrate more successfully into their community
9. Learn tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflict;
10. Relate the universal human communication strategies found within creative writing and public speaking to themselves, including an exploration of their past experiences and choices, their present situation, and their future possibility
11. Relate the universal communication themes to the lives of other human beings and society at-large;
12. Return to society as a contributing member.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our purpose is to enhance creative opportunities for inmates and to bring them the benefits and skills that come with writing and public speaking. We attempt to provide the best possible and most positive programs and we work closely with each facility to ensure that this happens. We believe that everyone has the capacity to read and write.

Communication is necessary for individual and societal growth, connection, and survival. It should be accessible to everyone. The values that guide our process are respect; collaboration in which vulnerability, risk, and improvisation lead to discovery; and resilience, persistence, patience, love, and laughter.

Creative Writing & Presenting 101

The purpose of this class is to experiment, create, and master aspects of creative writing. Each week will work towards creating four written pieces and four spoken pieces over the span of 12 weeks. By the end of this class you will have worked with a variety of brainstorming and pre-writing techniques, several different types of formal writing, and worked on your speaking and presentational skills. Each week will focus on brainstorming, editing, and discussing a focal reading. Every third week we will have a Thursday class that will be used for editing and presenting speeches. You will be responsible for reading all assigned readings, participating, and putting forth your best effort. At the end of this, a discussion about which writings should be published in *Captured Words Free Thoughts* will be conducted (a copy will be supplied to each participant).

- **February 12th: Introduction to course and each other**
 - Brainstorming on three words or ideas that describe us
 - Brief presentation of ourselves
 - Discussion of *Captured Words Free Thoughts*
- **February 19th: Family**
 - Focal reading:
 - Daniel Beaty - “Knock Knock”
 - Carson McCullers – “A Domestic Dilemma”
 - August Wilson – “Fences”
 - Discussion
 - Poetry selection from *Captured Words*
 - Free-writing: Web and Alphabet list
 - Narrative outline
- **February 26th: Narrative Due**
 - Editing stories/narratives in groups
 - Brainstorming speech ideas
 - Developing speech outlines
- **March 5th: Informative Speech Due**
 - Editing of final speech
 - Practice speech in small groups
- **March 7th: Presentation Day**
 - Speech presentation
 - Peer feedback
 - Discussion of poem for next week
- **March 12th: Human Rights**
 - Focal readings:

- Clarence Thomas, Justice, US Supreme Court: “I am a man, a Black man, an American.”
 - Susan B. Anthony, “Is it a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?”
 - Discussion
 - Poetry selection from *Captured Words*
 - Free-writing: Compare and contrast & Question and answers
 - Outline for script or spoken word
- **March 19th: *Script or Spoken Word due***
 - Editing written work in groups
 - Brainstorming for transforming into speech
 - Developing speech outline
- **March 26th: *Perspective Speech Due***
 - Editing of final speech
 - Practice speech in small groups
- **March 28th: *Presentation Day***
 - Speech presentation
 - Peer feedback
 - Discussion of poem for next week
- **April 2nd: Society**
 - Focal pieces:
 - Henry George – “The Crime of Poverty”
 - Assata Shakur – “Women in Prison: How it is With Us”
 - Discussion
 - Poetry selection from *Captured Words*
 - Free-write: Cause and effect & problem/solution
 - Outline for essay
- **April 9th: *Essay Due***
 - Editing written work in groups
 - Brainstorming for transforming written into speech
 - Developing speech outline
- **April 16th: *Persuasive Speech Due***
 - Editing of final speech
 - Practice speech in small groups
- **April 18th: *Final Presentation Day***
 - Speech presentation
 - Peer feedback
 - Discussion of pieces for publication in *Captured Words Free Thoughts*

ⁱ See: Charles B. Ubah and Robert L. Robinson Jr., "A Grounded Look at the Debate Over Prison-Based Education: Optimistic Theory Versus Pessimistic Worldview," *The Prison Journal* 83, (2003): 115-128; Dawn K. Cecil, Daniella A. Drapkin, Doris Layton Mackenzie and Laura J. Hickman "The Effectiveness of Adult Based Education and Life-Skills Programs in Reducing Recidivism: A Review and Assessment of the Literature," *JCE* 51, (2000): 216-217; Rosa Minhyo Cho and John H. Tyler, "Does Prison-Based Adult Basic Education Improve Postrelease Outcomes for Male Prisoners in Florida?" *Crime & Delinquency* 20, (2010): 1-31; Anderson, D. Anderson, S. and Schumacker, R., Correctional Education a Way to Stay Out: Recommendations for Illinois and a Report of the Anderson Study. (Chicago: Illinois, Council on Vocational Education, 1988); H. David Jenkins, Jennifer Pendry, and Stephen J. Steurer, *A Post Release Follow-Up of Correctional Education Program Completers Released in 1990-1991* (Baltimore: Maryland State Department of Education, 1993); Howard R.D. Gordon and Bracie Weldon, "The Impact of Careerand Technical Education Programs on Adult Offenders: Learning Behind Bars," *The Journal of Correctional Education* 54, (2003): 200-209; Lance Lochner and Enrico Moretti, "The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports," *American Economic Review* 95, (2004): 155-189.

ⁱⁱ Roy W. Persons, "Art Therapy With Serious Juvenile Offenders: A Phenomenological Analysis," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 53, (2009): 433-453; Rachel Williams and Janette Y. Taylor, "Narrative Art and Incarcerated Abused Women," *Art Education* 57, (2004): 46-52; Carol A. Mullen, "Reaching Inside Out: Arts-Based Educational Programming for Incarcerated Women," *Studies in Art Education* 40, (1999): 158; Jean Trounstine, "Texts as Teachers: Shakespeare Behind Bars and Changing Lives Through Literature," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 116, (2007): 65-77; Jonathan Shailor, "Humanizing Education Behind Bars: Shakespeare and the Theater of Empowerment," in Challenging the Prison-Industrial Complex: Activism, Arts, and Education Alternatives, edited by Stephen John Hartnett, (Illinois: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2011), 231; Eleanor M. Novek, "Heaven, Hell, and Here": Understanding the Impact of Incarceration through a Prison Newspaper," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, (2005): 281-301.